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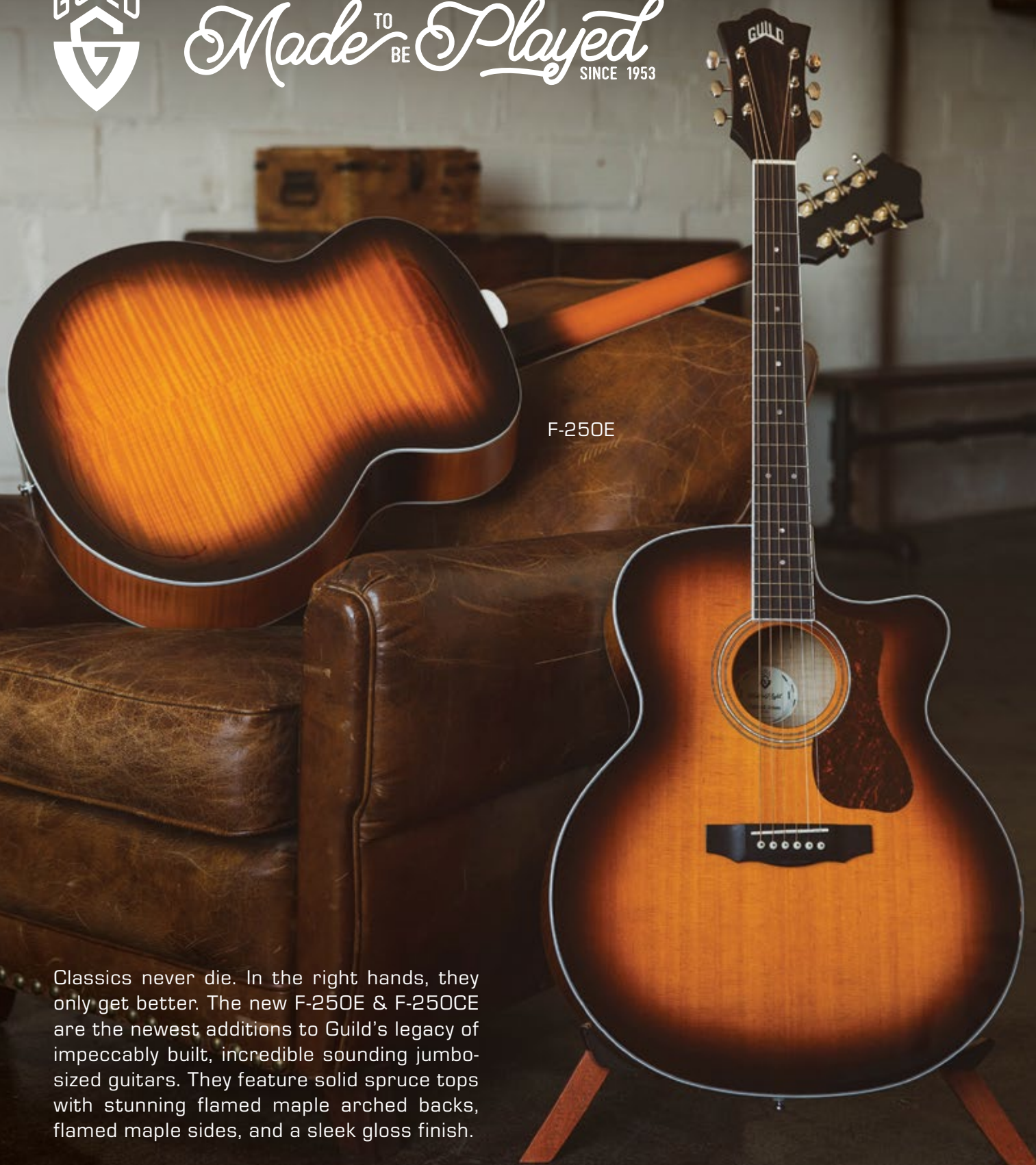
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ON FOREST FLOORS ONLY BECAUSE THE WOOD ISN'T PERFECTLY BLACK.
IT STRIKES US AS NOT ONLY UNSUSTAINABLE BUT DISRESPECTFUL.
SO WE ASKED OURSELVES: WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF WE DIDN'T
LEAVE "IMPERFECT" EBONY BEHIND? TURNS OUT THE ANSWER
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WHIT SMITH

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A close-up, artistic photograph of a Fender American Acoustasonic Telecaster guitar. The image focuses on the upper body and neck, showing the warm, reddish-brown wood grain of the body and the smooth, light-colored finish of the neck. The guitar's body is curved, and the neck is positioned diagonally across the frame. The background is dark, making the guitar stand out.

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THE FRONT PORCH

Ron Jackson



Long before “virtual” came to mean “digital,” a virtual community would grow up around a magazine with well-crafted content and a recognizable voice. In much the same way we develop a personal bond with an artist whose music moves or inspires us, we make similar, sometimes no less intense, connections with those who write well and clearly about the subjects that fascinate us or illustrate our fascinations through photos, images, and even cartoons. When such writers and image-makers become regular contributors to a magazine, it doesn't take long for a community of ardent readers to develop. Much to my delight, 120 *Acoustic Guitar* readers have accepted our invitation to become Sustaining Subscribers by taking out two-year, undiscounted subscriptions for themselves and a gift recipient. These expressions of confidence and support are going a long, long way toward assuring *Acoustic Guitar*'s current and long-term health. We are hoping the ranks of Sustaining Subscribers grow over the coming months.

As satisfying as virtual community membership can be, participating in live events is also an absolute gas. We're having more and more such experiences lately and we can't get enough. In the next few months, we'll be traveling with *Acoustic Guitar* readers to Cuba, Spain, and Ireland on music-themed, small-group tours. And we've recently kicked off a new workshop series, *Acoustic Guitar Live*, in our home studio in Richmond, California, where readers can connect in person with our contributing artist-teachers.

New York-based jazz guitarist Ron Jackson inaugurated the series with a clinic on jazz improvisation. As he does on the printed page,

Ron takes a relaxed but direct approach to teaching in person, zeroing in on the needs of each student while keeping the whole group involved in each step along the way. He cleared up a few things that have always mystified me about jazz, which is no mean feat. Ron's recently released album, *Standards and Other Songs*, evinces a singular feel in song selection, ensemble, and soloing. He steps outside the jazz canon for less-familiar standards, as well as songs by Van Morrison, Drake, and Bill Withers. Ron gets to the essence of each tune and communicates his sense of discovery and pleasure, as his trio explores the music without ostentation or extraneity.

Longtime contributing editor Steve James led the next *Acoustic Guitar Live* workshop, sharing tips and tunes from his forthcoming Stringletter book/video, *Roots and Blues Fingerstyle Guitar Explorations*, followed by a masterful evening house concert. Steve's ability to summon details and anecdotes from his extensive knowledge of American roots music, musicians, and recordings always boggles my mind.

Acoustic Guitar Live continues with workshops by Mark Hanson, Sean McGowan, Frank Vignola, and Jamie Stillway. If you live in or near the San Francisco Bay Area or plan to visit, we'd love to welcome you to *Acoustic Guitar*'s World HQ. Please check store.acousticguitar.com/collections/ag-live for more info, including schedule updates and additions.

Thanks for being part of our community. Now grab your guitar and dig into this new issue!

—David A. Lusterman

David.Lusterman@Stringletter.com

FEEDBACK

COME TOGETHER

I just wanted to let you know that a great connection was made thanks to *Acoustic Guitar*. After reading your article about the Syracuse Guitar League (August 2018), I thought it was a great concept and decided that I would like to attend one of the club meetings. So I went to their website, only to find that they didn't have a chapter listed in Tennessee. Long story short: I asked if I could start one. Open Chord/All things Music in Knoxville, Tennessee, became our sponsor, and we had our first meeting there in October. Last night was our third meeting and we have 15 members signed up and an average of 30-plus people that attend. We have some of the best musicians in this area that are our guest presenters and we are booked with presenters through March. It is a beautiful thing to see people of like mind and passion get together and play their guitars. So many people in the club ask me, "Why did you start this and how did you find out about it?" I give AG all the credit.

—Theresa Phillips, Knoxville, TN

RECORDING YOURSELF

Kudos to Doug Young on his excellent article "Home Recording for Acoustic Guitar" (March/April 2019). As a 40-year pro recording engineer and educator in the recording arts, I was pleasantly surprised to see him pack such useful and helpful advice into such a compact space; not easy to do! All of his tips are right on the money, and he doesn't waste readers' time with old wives' tales and gear plugs. If someone is looking for further information on this topic, there are many very good books and videos to be found out there on both recording your guitar and setting up your personal recording space, but Doug's article is a great primer on the subject and worth clipping and saving as reference material.

—Tom Blakemore, Chicago, IL

STUDENTS OF A CERTAIN AGE

Congratulations to Ben Fong-Torres ("While My Guitar Gently Smirks," February 2019)! Beside the fact that learning something new as we age is good for the brain, it's great to finally follow a passion. As a music teacher myself, I was really glad to read of professor Swenson's advice to press the strings only as hard as needed. That is very important, as it helps prevent fretting-hand injuries.

A few words of advice I give to students: a) Anything worth doing is worth doing poorly. You have to be willing to be bad at something in order to get good at it. b) Music is organized noise; any sound you can make with your instrument can be useful somewhere. If you like a sound, remember how you made it, so you



Jay Duncan

can use it! c) Practice makes permanent; perfect practice makes perfect. Thus, deliberate and slow is first. Speed is second. Make sure the motions you're committing to muscle memory are the motions you want to be doing.

—Erik Hoffman, Oakland, CA

ROSEWOOD REFLECTIONS

Your February roundup of mid-priced alt-wood guitars is subtitled: "Options abound for rosewood-free guitars..." Not, apparently, if you're left-handed. Only two of 12 make mention of an all-too-typical blind spot when filling in the "OTHER" section of the product review? How often (if ever) do your writers ask that simple-to-ask, simple-to-answer question: is a stock lefty available? Other lefties out there can attest to the fact that even guitar builders often forget to mention this option, or make it needlessly difficult to ascertain on their own websites.

—David Arnttuffus, Shoreline, WA

I have been playing guitar/banjo/bass for over 60 years and enjoy your magazine immensely. Your February 2019 "Beyond Rosewood" article was timely and interesting but there's a significant guitar that wasn't mentioned. Vancouver luthier Jay Duncan went to a small village in Uganda, East Africa, several years ago and built a guitar factory and a school for business and lutherie. He gives the youth of the village an education, a trade, and a sense of dignity. The guitars are built onsite with locally sourced woods such as Mugavu and ebony. They are sent after finishing to Canada, where cases and electronics are added. The African continent design on the headstock and the apprentice's signature on the plate inside add to one's sense of connection to these handcrafted, local creations.

—Douglas Nuelle, Blue Ridge, GA

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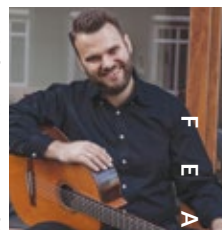
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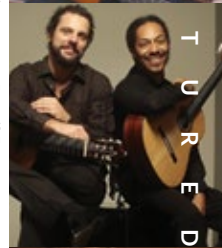
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Yasmin Williams Finds Her Own Way

Unique fingerstylist adapts new techniques on the fly

BY NICK MILLEVOI

Watching Yasmin Williams perform, it is immediately apparent that the 22-year-old guitarist has an uncommon approach to her solo playing. Her recent performance of the song “GuitKa” on NPR’s *Night Owl* opens with Williams holding her guitar on her lap with a kalimba placed on its top. Williams begins with a kalimba melody, played by her right hand, and soon adds her left hand, simultaneously strumming chords and tapping a melody. Percussive accompaniment is added by alternately hitting the body of the guitar with her right palm and elbow and using a tap shoe on a piece of wood placed atop her guitar case. The grooves and motifs of the song come to life with the rich variety of tones and textures that these techniques supply. Multitasking at this level may seem dizzying, but Williams handles all of these actions with ease.

While it can be hard to know what’s happening just by listening to Williams’ 2018 release, *Unwind*, YouTube videos help navigate her repertoire of techniques. Whether using tools such as a cello bow or a guitar hammer—a guitar version of a dulcimer hammer—in order to “problem solve,” as she explains, Williams’ methods are meant to contribute to the big picture in her compositions, creating unique colors and timbres that serve the song. (See a transcription of Williams’ piece “New Beginnings” on page 68.)

Despite the singularity of her approach, Williams receives plenty of comparisons to guitarists known for two-handed tapping, like Stanley Jordan and the late Michael Hedges. “Every time I play a show, Stanley Jordan will come up. He’s great but I sound nothing like him. I’m not there.” Mentions of Michael Hedges and his own use of tapping and guitar percussion aren’t

far behind either: “People ask me, ‘Do you know Michael Hedges?’ but I’d never sat down and listened to the music. I’m starting to listen to it now, and it’s pretty cool. I don’t really take anything in terms of technique and style away from it, I just enjoy listening to him.” But while Williams’ music might not derive from artists such as Jordan and Hedges, it’s her adventurous and open-minded approach that invites these comparisons, and that just goes to show that she is on an exciting and less-trodden path.

Following her graduation from NYU last year with a degree in composition and music theory, Williams moved back home to Woodbridge, Virginia, where we caught up with her on the phone to discuss her background, inspirations, and creative process. With school behind her, the guitarist is now focusing on her next set of music and supporting *Unwind* by hitting the road.



You've said that you started playing guitar after you beat *Guitar Hero 2*. How did you start learning?

I started learning by teaching myself for a year. I was in ninth grade. I got an electric guitar first and started taking lessons. My teacher was a heavy blues and rock dude. He taught me a Beatles song, "Blackbird," and I thought it was cool to play because I really like fingerpicking and I wanted to learn more of that, but he couldn't really teach more of that so I quit and picked up acoustic and taught myself.

At first I thought acoustic guitar was kind of lame. I wanted to be a shredder, like Paul Gilbert and all those people, but I can't do that at all. I switched to acoustic and I was a lot better and enjoyed it more.

As far as your development of technique and extended technique—such as the percussive stuff you do on the body of the guitar, finger-tapping, keeping the guitar on your lap, the use of a bow and tap shoes, etc.—how did you find those sounds?

I really only use techniques if the composition calls for it. If I see someone do something cool, I might try and imitate, but I usually don't. The violin bow I got specifically from [the Icelandic band] Sigur Rós. I tried it on electric first and it was an epic fail, but it kind of works on acoustic.

Everything else I just came up with because I couldn't do something. I started lap-tapping because I'm really bad at tapping the regular way; lap-tapping is a lot more comfortable because I have small hands and can see the notes better. I started using tap shoes for "GuitKa," because my hands were busy and I knew I wanted a percussive thing throughout the entire song, and the only way I could do that would be if I used my feet. I've never used tap shoes before but I just figured out how to do it. That's pretty much how I come up with stuff: I just figure it out. Problem-solving.

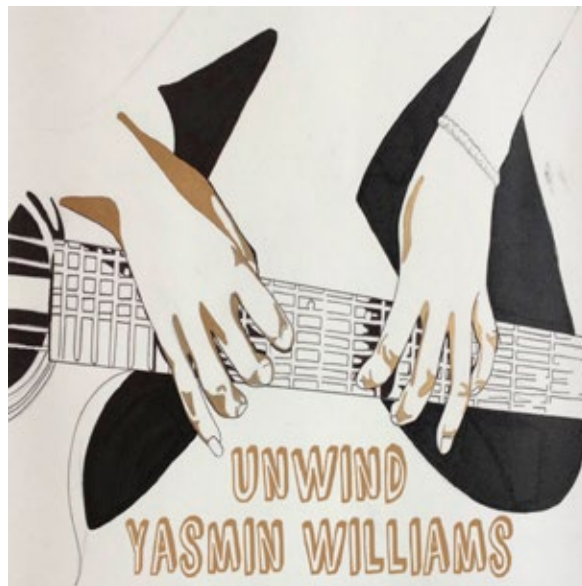
What is your composition process like?

It's kind of like doodling. You know how you doodle in class? I'll just doodle on my guitar. I might come up with an idea that I like and I'll either record it or write it down, and a couple days after that I'll keep playing it until I come up with something else that fits with it. Songs to me are kind of like puzzles. I come up with various sections and try and fit them together. It's rarely a fully flowing thing.

Can you talk a bit about your composition process on a song like "GuitKa," where you're playing guitar on your lap with your left hand, playing a kalimba on top of your guitar with your right hand, and using tap shoes to keep a beat? How does that evolve?

With "GuitKa," I bought this kalimba and had it for a few months. I was writing a song on guitar and had forgotten about it because I couldn't figure out anything else to put into it, and I thought the kalimba would sound really good with it. I try to find something that matches what I have in my head.

It's just kind of like, "I need a beat here; I need a different instrument timbre here." I'd never done any of that before that song, I'd never used a tap shoe or played a kalimba.



I knew about the kalimba through the Earth, Wind & Fire song "Kalimba," and I just thought that would sound cool with this idea. I don't know why it popped into my head; I hadn't thought about that song in years. That's why I can't really describe it. I don't know what I'm doing, it just happens.

Watching your videos, I've learned a lot about how you make your sounds that I wouldn't have picked up from just listening to the record. What do you consider your essential tools?

Tap shoes are number one now. The cello bow. I have two kalimbas. The Engle Guitar Hammer I use on "On a Friday Night." I use a Tonewood amp, which is necessary now, and a capo, too, because I use that a ton.

The guitar I use now was made by the Sublime Guitar Company. I think I got it six

years ago. It's got really low action and I really don't have to do anything to maintain it, so I love it. The model is the Adelaide D2CE.

You're also getting a custom Skytop guitar built. What's different about that?

Instead of having a traditional soundhole in the middle it has two sound ports on the side of the guitar facing upward. And it's just crazy—it's like the sound surrounds your entire head; it sounds amazing.

The one I'm getting built has a Sitka spruce top that has Teredo holes in it. It's wood that's been buried under water for hundreds of years, and little [Teredo] mollusks burrowed holes in it. I really like the sound of that wood. The Skytop is multi-scale, which I love, and its overall shorter scale length fits my small hands.

Where do you find your inspiration musically?

Jimi Hendrix was huge, just because of how he went about playing—he was really unorthodox and I admired that about him. He did things his own way. Nirvana was a big one, too, because it was really easy to learn their songs in the beginning and to play along with them, so I ended up learning all of their songs.

In general, I just really appreciate people who have their own way of doing things and don't really care about the standard. I'm getting into Elizabeth Cotten now, and she plays guitar really weirdly. I like how she played left-handed and used her index finger to play bass notes and her thumb to play the melody.

Erick Turnbull—he was on CandyRat records. Kaki King is cool; Andy McKee is cool. I don't listen to too much fingerstyle, I listen to older, more folk-y stuff.

Smooth jazz was big in my house. My mom always says, "You play guitar because I listened to smooth jazz when I was pregnant with you," because no one else really plays in my family.

Smooth jazz gets the short end of the stick a lot.

It's really bashed. I don't know why. I don't know what people have against it. It's not meant to be Miles Davis or bebop or whatever. It's its own thing. Most of my songs are pretty relaxing, low-key, kind of subdued. None of my songs are aggressive and that's probably because of how much smooth jazz I listened to as a kid.

AC

FINGERS STOPS



STYLE RITES

Exploring Joan Baez's elegant and understated guitar accompaniments

By Jeffrey Pepper Rodgers



Baez performing with one of her Martin 0-45JBs at her 75th birthday celebration concert, January 27, 2016.

In the summer of 1959, an 18-year-old singer in a bright dress strode onto the stage at the first Newport Folk Festival—a surprise guest of headliner Bob Gibson. Strumming a 12-string, Gibson kicked off the spiritual “Virgin Mary Had One Son,” and she added a crystalline high harmony and sang a solo verse, her voice growing stronger line by line. On their second song, a jaunty call-and-response version of “We Are Crossing the Jordan River,” she started to cut loose—her voice intense and commanding, with a nearly operatic wide vibrato. And when that song ended, in the words of singer/guitarist Dave Van Ronk (captured in David Hajdu’s book *Positively Fourth Street*), “Newport absolutely exploded.”

That young singer was, of course, Joan Baez, who quickly became queen of the burgeoning folk scene. After Newport, folk fans lined up around the block to hear her perform at Club 47, her home base in Cambridge, Massachusetts. In short order she was selling out concert halls around the country; her image—barefoot and cradling a guitar—graced the cover of *Time* magazine; and her first records of unadorned, centuries-old ballads and traditional songs went gold. As Bob Dylan put it in the PBS documentary *How Sweet the Sound*, “Joanie was at the forefront of a new dynamic in American music.”

In the decades since, Baez has remained one of the defining artists of her generation. Understandably, the primary focus of attention on Baez’s music has always been her extraordinary voice—as well as her commitment to using that voice for political causes, from the civil rights and antiwar movements of the 1960s up through present-day activism on issues such as immigration and climate change. There’s another side of Baez’s musical legacy, though, that has been a quieter but still deep influence: her guitar style. A skilled and precise fingerstyle player who helped bring parlor guitars into the spotlight, Baez modeled an approach to accompaniment that was—in keeping with her music—not flashy, but effective, elegant, and complete-sounding with no other instruments. Like her singing, Baez’s guitar style is all about clarity.

This lesson takes a closer look at the guitar side of Baez, through a series of examples inspired by standout songs in her repertoire, from her 1960 debut to her Grammy-nominated 2018 release, *Whistle Down the Wind*. Baez, now 78, has said that album may be her last, and her concert appearances that wind up this summer will also be her farewell from touring, so it’s an especially appropriate time to look back and celebrate her contributions to the landscape of the acoustic guitar.



HEINRICH KLAFFS

TRADITIONAL ROOTS

Baez's introduction to the folk world came when she was teenager through a life-changing Pete Seeger concert in Palo Alto, California, where she was inspired by not only the songs but also Seeger's uncompromising political stands. She discovered great voices such as Harry Belafonte and Odetta, and when her family moved from Palo Alto to Boston in 1958, Joan and her sister Mimi (singer Mimi Fariña) found themselves right next to one of the epicenters of the folk scene—Cambridge's Harvard Square. As she noted in her 2017 induction speech at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, "I was lucky enough to have found my voice when coffee shops were the order of the day."

On guitar, one of Baez's formative influences was her friend Debbie Green (later the wife of singer-songwriter Eric Andersen), who taught her how to fingerpick and shared her repertoire of ballads and traditional songs. Tragic ballads like "Barbara Allen" and "Silver Dagger" became Baez's core repertoire through the early years of her career. "The ballads were unrequited love

and they were beautiful, and love and death and beauty were all somehow tangled in there," Baez reflected in *How Sweet the Sound*. "Young as I was, I seemed to have a heart and soul full of the sadness that it took to be attracted to those songs, and almost only those songs. They were sad and long and beautiful. And there I was."

Example 1 is based on Baez's version of one of those songs, the Child ballad "Mary Hamilton," featured on her 1960 self-titled debut. The story is as sad as they come—Mary, a royal attendant, becomes pregnant by the king, casts her baby out to sea, and is convicted for the crime—and Baez plays and sings it with clear-eyed understatement. The guitar part follows a simple arpeggio in a style more akin to classical guitar than folk/blues fingerpicking. The example uses C shapes; to match the pitch of the original recording, tune down a half step.

To get started, practice the picking pattern just on the C in the first two measures. Finger/string assignments can be flexible, but as a rule, pick the bottom three strings with your thumb, the third string with your index,

second string with the middle, and first string with the ring. Baez typically plays with a plastic thumbpick and three fingerpicks (she uses aLaska Piks—more on that below), but bare fingers work fine, too.

Another traditional song from her debut album, "House of the Rising Sun" is the basis of **Example 2**. The example is shown in the key of E minor, but again, on the original recording the guitar is tuned down—in this case, down a whole step to D. So tune accordingly if you want to play along with Baez's track.

"House of the Rising Sun" has many variations, and you'll note that the progression here differs from the Animals' 1964 version that became the de facto standard. As in Ex. 1, you are picking arpeggios but also adding some partial chords. For the double-stops on the treble strings (as on beat 2 of the first two measures), pick the strings simultaneously with your fingers. When you're playing two or three notes together in the bass (as on the first beat of bar 5), strum with your thumb. In measures 3, 5, and 7, play eighth-note triplets to add rhythmic variety.



Example 1

C **Am** **C**

let ring throughout (all examples)

6 **G7** **F** **C**

12 **Am** **C** **G7** **C**

Example 2

Em **G** **B7** **Em**

5 **B7** **Em** **B7**

Example 3 shows a fingerpicking pattern used in the spiritual “Oh Freedom,” which Baez sang at the 1963 March on Washington. The 1960 recording by Harry Belafonte, one of Baez’s early inspirations, is all vocal, and Baez sings it a cappella, too, on the *Live at Newport* compilation of her festival performances from 1963–65. A live version of “Oh Freedom” with guitar can be heard on the soundtrack to *How Sweet the Sound*. The picking style in this example is similar to

what’s used in Ex. 1, except that the arpeggio is more linear—it goes up to the first string and then back down. Mark Goldenberg, who played nylon-string guitar on Baez’s latest album, notes that these types of patterns give Baez’s playing a “fluid rolling quality.” Throughout, let strings ring as much as possible, for a legato sound.

It’s worth noting that the 12-fret parlor guitars that Baez favors—in particular petite 0- and 00-size Martin models—are ideal for this

type of playing, with their easy articulation, balanced sound, and fingerstyle-friendly string spacing (see “Baez’s Martin Guitars” p. 28).

THUMB AND STRUM

Not all of Baez’s early songs were slow ballads. “The Lily of the West,” a traditional Irish song featured on her second album, *Vol. 2*, in 1961, is a bit of a picking workout. The guitar part is more like flatpicking accompaniment, or Carter-style picking, with

Example 3

The musical score for Example 3 is written for guitar in E major (three sharps) and 12/8 time. It consists of four systems of music, each with a treble clef staff and a guitar staff. The guitar staff includes fret numbers and picking patterns. The first system is marked with a '12' and a repeat sign. The second system has two endings, marked '1.' and '2.'. The third system has two endings, marked '1.' and '2.'. The fourth system has two endings, marked '1.' and '2.'. The key signature is E major (three sharps). The time signature is 12/8. The score includes various chords: E, B7, E7, A, and B7. The picking patterns are indicated by numbers 0, 1, 2, 3, and dots, representing different strings and picking techniques.



bass notes followed by brush strums on the high strings. Try it in **Example 4**. Use E-minor shapes and capo up at the sixth fret to sound in B \flat minor.

The opening measures lay out the basic pattern: bass note on beat 1, one or two strums on 2, hammer-on for the bass note on 3, and one or two strums on 4. Use your thumb for the bass notes, and strum up or down with your fingers. If you prefer fingerpicks, this is where the type of picks matters. Fingerpicks that curve over the pad of your fingers will catch on the strings if you try to strum down (toward the first string). The aLaska Piks Baez uses fit over your nail—they are basically a reinforcement or extension of your nail—so they allow you to pick both up and down, as with banjo frailing. Where the notation shows eighth notes on

the treble strings, try a down-up strum with your index alone or index and middle fingers together. The motion is more like a light flick than a hard strum.

Baez's original recording zips along at about 144 bpm, which will keep your picking hand busy. To learn this song, "Slow it way down," advises Allison Shapira, who covers the Baez repertoire in the tribute duo Joan and Joni along with fellow songwriter Kipyn Martin. "Build up muscle memory so both the picking pattern and the hammers become second nature, and then slowly speed it up."

In measures 5–12, create a dramatic intro by replacing the bass notes with a melodic line that descends from the fourth fret of the third string all the way down to the open sixth string, while keeping the strums going on beats 2 and 4.



Vol. 2, 1961

Example 4 *Capo VI

Em

* Music sounds a tritone higher than written.

THE DYLAN CONNECTION

In addition to popularizing many traditional songs, Baez has been influential for spotlighting the work of contemporary songwriters—most famously, the early music of Bob Dylan. She first heard the little-known troubadour in 1961 at Gerde's Folk City in New York's Greenwich Village—she later described him a “scruffy little mess” at the time, but she found him captivating nonetheless. Two years later Baez and Dylan played a couple of duets at Newport and she invited him on tour, using her star power to introduce him to mainstream audiences. The two musicians were romantically involved for a while, too, but their musical and personal relationship soon frayed, as captured in painful detail in *Dont Look Back*, the documentary chronicling Dylan's 1965 tour of England.

Baez has recorded a slew of Dylan songs, including a full album's worth on *Any Day Now*



ROWLAND SCHERMAN - U.S. NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION

Example 5

*Capo II

Chord progression: G, C/E, Gmaj7/F#, G6

* Music sounds a major second higher than written.

Chord progression: G, Bm, Em

Annotation: play three times

Chord progression: C, G



in 1968. One of her notable Dylan covers is “Forever Young,” which she put out as a single in 1974, shortly after Dylan himself released it on *Planet Waves*. Baez played an accompaniment part similar to **Example 5**. Capo at the second fret to sound in the key of A. In the first four bars, move up the neck on the second and fourth strings before settling into the picking pattern on the G shape. The quick hammer-on/pull-off in bar 5 recurs at the end of the example, to punctuate the end of a verse.

Dylan also inspired some of Baez’s own songwriting. In “To Bobby,” released in 1972, she made a direct (and, she understood later, futile) appeal to Dylan to pick up the mantle of political protest. And a few years later, a phone call from Dylan stirred one of her best original songs, “Diamonds and Rust”—memorably turned into a hard-rocking anthem by Judas

Priest. **Example 6** shows a passage similar to Baez’s intro in that haunting song.

In “Diamonds and Rust,” the Spanish flavor of Baez’s guitar style shows through, especially in the recurring fingerstyle rolls, as in measure 2, starting right after the downbeat. Pick the top three strings with your index, middle, and ring fingers in quick succession, aiming for a smooth and even flow of notes. Starting in measure 4, the low notes of the pattern climb up the fourth and third strings—this is reminiscent of the intro passage in Ex. 4, except ascending rather than descending.

TELLING THE STORY

The final example of this lesson is inspired by the title track of Baez’s most recent album, *Whistle Down the Wind*. Though her voice has lost some of its range and power, Baez’s singing on the album is emotive and deeply affecting,

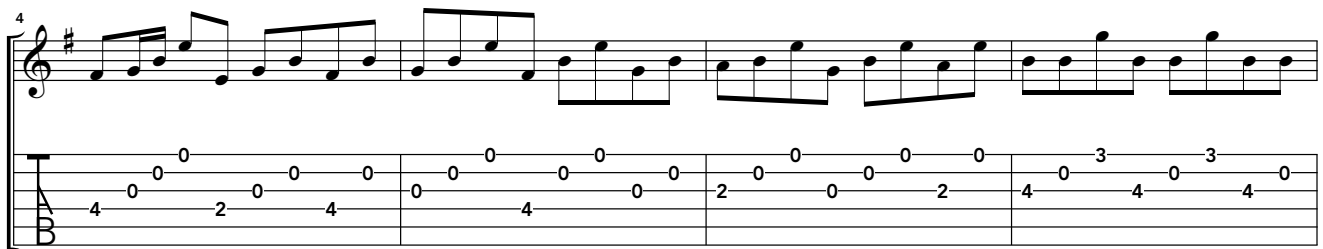
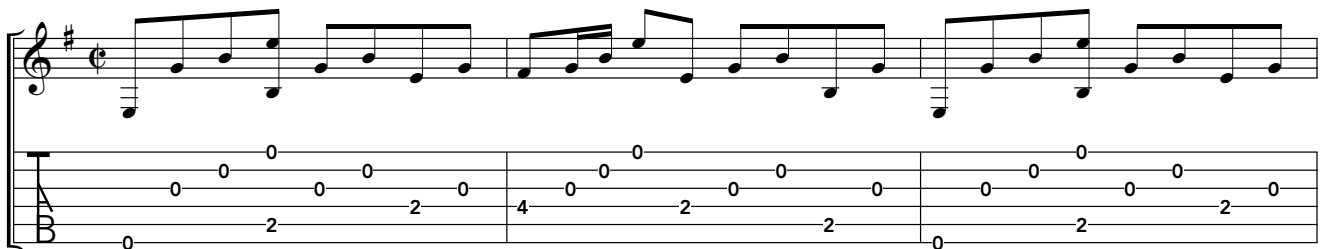
and her playing is featured on most of the tracks—she brought out her original 1929 0-45 for the sessions. Producer Joe Henry, as in many of his projects, wanted to take a live, organic approach. The sessions started with all the players listening to Baez play and sing the songs alone, recalls Mark Goldenberg.

“Originally Joe had me there to support Joan in the event that she had difficulty playing her parts as she sang,” says Goldenberg. “But that did not turn out to be the case, so I moved over to nylon-string. Greg Leisz was on electric, steel, mandolin, and everything else. It was then a matter of finding parts that would fit in the overall picture. We had a full band playing live, with Joe gently coaxing the best out of everyone. Those were great sessions.”

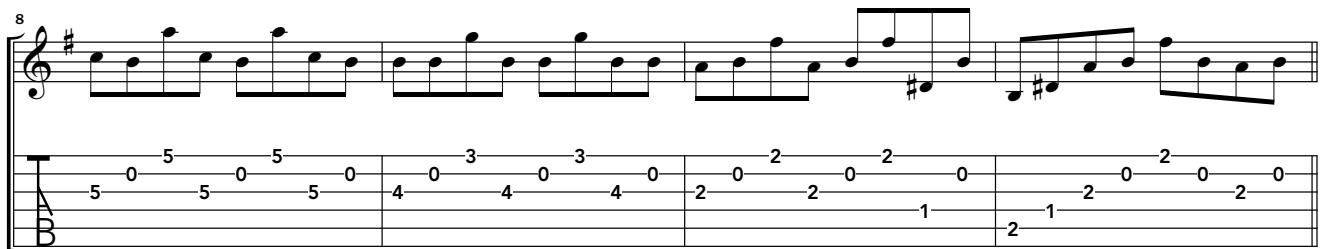
On “Whistle Down the Wind,” one of two Tom Waits songs on the album, the rich tones

Example 6

Em(add9)



B7





of Baez's guitar are at the center of the arrangement. **Example 7** shows a part similar to her intro. Use key-of-A shapes (and capo at the first fret to be in the album key), and add hammer-ons, pull-offs, and slides as shown to bring out a bit of melody on the second string. In several spots, use chord rolls (indicated with wavy vertical lines); these are similar to the rolls used in Ex. 6, except played faster, so the sound registers as a chord rather than a quick series of single notes. You could play these chord rolls as a strum with your finger(s), slowed down enough that the notes register individually, but you can get a cleaner sound by picking each string in succession.

As you delve into these examples, remember that the guitar parts don't exist in isolation—they are carefully crafted to support the song's melody and mood. "The dynamics of her playing are coupled to the dynamics of her singing," notes Scott Nygaard, the flatpicker (and former AG editor) who has performed with Baez's band. Pay attention, he says, to "how she uses both to communicate the feeling and meaning of the song she's singing."

That is, to me, the most important lesson of Baez's guitar style. Good technique is necessary to create accompaniment parts that are clear, graceful, and tonally rich, but ultimately the melody and the words matter most. The job of the guitar is to help tell the story. **AG**



JOAN BAEZ'S MARTIN GUITARS

Joan Baez found her soulmate guitar, a 1929 Martin 0-45, for a few hundred dollars in the early '60s. "It was my first serious folk guitar," Baez recalled in a PBS *Craft in America* documentary about C. F. Martin & Co. "I had a Goya with gut strings, then I had a gigantic Gibson which hung around my knees, and I've never been able to deal with a really large guitar at all." Cradling her 0-45, she added, "So this one just became home."

Baez's main touring guitars are two Martin 0-45JBs, the limited-edition models that commemorate her original 0-45. When Martin took apart that 0-45 in the 1990s in order to study it, they discovered that a luthier who'd worked on the guitar years before left some hidden commentary inside: "Too bad you're a Communist!" So the remakes include that handwritten inscription, too, which can be seen with an inspection mirror.

Other Martin parlor guitars that Baez played in her early years include a 00-45 and a circa 1880 0-40. (See *Great Acoustics* on page 98.) Martin acquired the 0-40 in 2015 and added the instrument to the collection at the Martin Guitar Museum.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF C.F. MARTIN & CO.

Example 7

*Capo I

Chord progression: A, E, A, D/F#, Bm

* Music sounds a minor second higher than written.

Chord progression: E, A, E, A, E

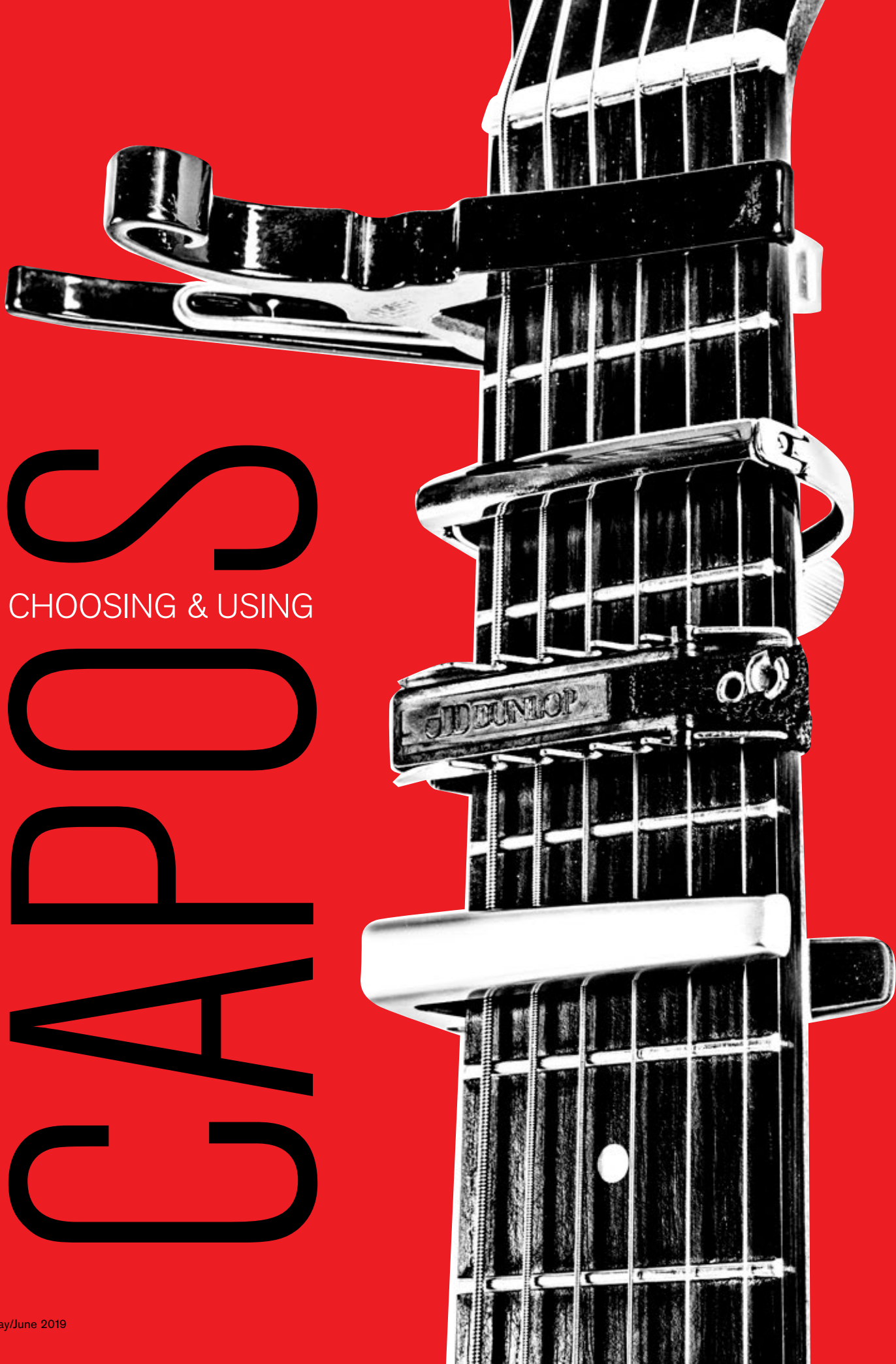
DISCOVER YOUR SOUND

PRS SE Acoustics are built from an array of beautiful, solid tonewoods and tonewood veneers, each with its own unique voice. Sharing the DNA of our Private Stock acoustics, PRS SE Series acoustic guitars come in either our Angelus Cutaway or Tonare Grand body shape and feature PRS hybrid X/Classical bracing, so you can choose just the right details to complete your sound and style. Go to your local PRS SE dealer to find the one that connects with you or visit www.prsguitars.com to hear more.



GAPOS

CHOOSING & USING



Capos have been around almost as long as guitars, and for such a simple device, there are a surprising number of brands, types, and subtle factors involved in choosing one. They are valuable tools for changing the tuning of your guitar, and as such, you should learn how to use a capo and not view them as “cheaters.”

It would be impossible to test every capo on all of your guitars for looks, compatibility, or problems. Ideally, there should be capo stores at the mall, or an old-fashioned Capo Man vendor who brings his cart through your village with every kind of capo for you to try and buy. Luckily, capos are not super-expensive, and since they rarely wear out or break, many of us end up with our own mini-collection. There isn't a single “best” capo that does everything perfectly for every player, and your favorite go-to capo will likely change a number of times over your life. Here is a breakdown of things to consider when choosing the right capo for your needs.

FULL CAPO VS. PARTIAL CAPO

Full capos all do the same musical job: shorten all strings across the fingerboard, allowing you to sing and play in different keys. The vast majority of capos used by players and available on the market are this type.

Partial capos are the new kids on the block, and like their name suggests, they clamp fewer strings to the fretboard than full capos do. They change the landscape of fingerboard possibilities in much the same way as altered tunings, though they can be used in a way that does not change the fretboard's geometry the way that retuning does. The most common single-purpose partial capos clamp either five outer strings or three inner strings, though lesser-known ones can clamp one, two, or four. While partial capos maintain fretboard geometry, they unfortunately block access to parts of your fingerboard.

You use partial capos and altered tunings for similar reasons; they both give new resonances, chord voicings, and fingering possibilities, but a partial capo is not a tuning. You can even do both at the same time, which is the exciting new frontier. They can be confusing, but partial capos work in any tuning on any guitar or fretted instrument, offering a head-spinning new world of possibilities for any level of player or songwriter, plus revolutionary easy-guitar options for children, special-needs players, or beginners.

FIT AND RADIUS

The biggest issue in selecting a capo is that steel-string guitars have a curved (radiused)

fingerboard, and nylon-string guitars typically have a flat fingerboard. Neither is better, it's just tradition. Most capos are labeled prominently as flat, radius, or curved, but it's messier because there is considerable variation in capo and fretboard curvature, affecting a capo's performance.

Each guitar manufacturer chooses a fingerboard radius that suits them, which can be a hidden factor making some capos work better on some guitars. If the capo curvature doesn't match the fingerboard's radius, your outer or inner strings might buzz or stretch out of tune. Some companies have developed designs that can adjust to different fingerboard radiuses, like G7th's capos with Adaptive Radius Technology, or Thalia's interchangeable snap-on feet that can accommodate variations in radius, though those can be lost or misplaced.

Guitar necks vary widely in every dimension, so you might find that your sleek, modern guitar neck, especially at the first or second fret, is too thin for a particular capo, or too wide or too thick at higher frets. Your guitar's neck shape or width will likely vary at different places, greatly complicating capo fit issues. Every capo has a range of how thin, thick, or wide a neck it can handle.

Partial capos also have the issue of string spacing. Only the pioneering Third Hand (discontinued) and the SpiderCapo, both universal partial capos, adjust for string spacing, which also typically increases at higher frets. A three-string capo that can clamp 007770 (only strings 2, 3, and 4 at fret seven) on a fingerpicker's acoustic might have trouble with 022200 on a narrow, very curved electric.

TONE

The type of rubber varies in different capos, affecting performance. Softer rubber will deaden your guitar's tone slightly, as compared to a harder grade, but can also mute strings better with less force. (Fingers are soft, but they work.) On a 12-string, softer capo rubber oozes down a little, stopping the octave strings on the bottom four courses better than a harder capo.

FORCE

Force is a major factor in capo functionality. Elastic, spring, and screw clamping mechanisms exert varying amounts of force, which gets applied in slightly different ways to your strings. You'll need a capo that applies just enough, but not too much, force—that might cause tuning problems. You'll also want to choose a capo that can handle both your choice of string gauges and the action (or height) of your strings above the fretboard. Popular spring-powered capos work

Capos are simple devices for temporarily changing the pitch of one, several, or all the strings on your guitar. But is anything ever really that simple?

BY HARVEY REID



FULL D'Addario NS Capo Pro
Everybody needs a good reliable capo they like the look and feel of; you have to find one (or several!) that works and feels best to you. Make sure it has right curvature and fit, and enough force.



PARTIAL Shubb C7B
Partials began with the 5-string, but the 3-string seen above is the most mysterious and powerful. They allow children to play, or help you write or arrange totally new music—but you'll come face to face with how confounding fingerboards really are.



SPIDER SpiderCapo
Currently the only universal partial; it's the go-to for new explorations in partial capoing, though it's complicated to operate, quirky, and calls attention to itself.



SIDE-ATTACH G7th Nashville
Side-attach open-jaw gives great control of tension, with many options; attach from either side or use on your uke or banjo, though slower than spring-loaded.



YOKE Elliott Elite

With balanced force application, these are the most stable capos, but they aren't fast operating or as accommodating for fat and wide necks.



SPRING-LOADED Kyser Quick Change

Quick-on, quick-off, or even move mid-song—though young kids or older adults might not have the hand strength. Springs weaken with age and don't always adjust.



STRAP Dunlop 14C

Tried and true—old-school, small and inexpensive, no springs to weaken or screws to fall out.



REVERSIBLE Liberty Flip Model 43

Clamp 3 or 4 inner strings or 4 outer ones. A low-profile way to access most of the deepest and best partial capo ideas.

fine for standard light-gauge strings and normal actions, but if you have medium or heavy strings, high action, a 12-string, or even if you just play really hard, you may experience some rattling and buzzing if you don't choose a model specifically designed for the job.

PLAYING IN TUNE

The more you tighten a capo, the more likely it is to put you slightly out of tune. The bass strings, particularly, will be stretched the most, especially with thicker strings or higher action. This is complicated, because guitar necks are not the same thickness over the whole fingerboard, and usually get thicker and wider at higher frets. Fixed-force capos will thus generally get tighter as you go up the neck. Open-jaw capos apply slightly more force from one side, and you will want to experiment with attaching them from the bass or treble sides to see if that makes a difference in the behavior of your bass strings.

CONVENIENCE

The dizzying number of generic spring capos, or established brands like Kyser Quick-Change, Jim Dunlop Trigger, and D'Addario NS-Tri-Action capos can be popped on and off very fast with one hand, moved to another fret in mid-song, and stored on your headstock or strap. Vital for some performers, this convenience comes at a cost, since spring capos weaken with age, may not be adjustable, and have a tendency to pull slightly sideways and a little off-center on some guitars. Children and some adults have trouble with hand strength when operating spring capos or some snap-on models, and might prefer screw clamps. Rubber dries out and wears a little, and Shubb capos allow you to easily replace the rubber sleeve, which is not an option for most other brands. The Paige, Dan Crary, and G7th Heritage capos form a closed loop when latched, clamping more evenly, and can be stored above the nut where they don't get lost. My own creations, the Liberty Flip capos, are the first two-sided capos. The Model 65 is both a six-string (curved) full capo and a five-string partial; the Model 43 clamps either four or three inner strings, depending how you put it on.

The bodies of some capos may get in the way of your left hand, especially with partial capos, since you may want to reach over or around them for notes under or behind the capo. Most capos work best from the bass side, but you will want to try attaching a three-string partial capo from either the bass or treble side, to minimize it wiggle out of position in mid-song.

ADJUSTMENTS

Not all capos are equally adjustable, and this is a big concern. Screw-clamp mechanisms are reliable and can be adjusted precisely without

over-tightening, but more control means more revolutions, and slower operation. Several brands combine an adjustable thumbscrew with a snap mechanism. Adjust for the size and tightness, then snap on and off quickly. The ingenious Ned Steinberger-designed D'Addario capos allow the convenience of springs with the added advantage of a screw-adjustable clamp, but they may need to be adjusted for higher frets or times of year with high or low humidity. You may enjoy the pressure-fit snap-on mechanisms of the Shubb, Thalia, or the G7th, or you might prefer to stick with a classic spring, clamp, or screw-knob.

WEIGHT

Attaching a heavy mass of metal to the neck may interfere with the resonances of your instrument, and you'll want to consider that issue if you are attracted to a Thalia, G7th, or Dan Crary model. It's also harder to keep a heavy capo in your pocket when you go to a party or gig. Small, compact, less visible capos have advantages, but are easier to lose.

PRICE

No matter how good an \$80 capo is, it might be unreasonable for you to spend that much, and you can be forgiven for buying a cheap one on the internet if it does what you need, which is to sing or play in a higher key. At the same time, you might feel better about yourself with a really nice capo that works well. It can make you feel good when you use it.

FASHION

When I was young, most people used Bill Russell or Hamilton capos, and I remember feeling like a pioneer with my new Jim Dunlop nylon-strap mechanism before I saw more people using them. Inexpensive capos are usually made of aluminum, which can be painted or anodized in a number of ways to make them sexier or more fun. Some people are fine with plastic, and others are drawn to brass, pink, camo, or even wood. Shubb makes its flagship capo in both brass and nickel-plated brass, since nice gold-colored brass will tarnish, especially near salt water. The uber-modern machined look of the G7th, the playful Shark capo, or the hardwood Wingo all might appeal to you. Thalia is using exotic woods and creating limited editions. Flamenco players used to sport jeweled capos as a sign of status. A beautifully machined hand-made-in-the-USA capo makes many players feel better than using something that may feel cheap and gaudy.

Good luck, have fun, and don't be afraid to splurge and try a new capo now and then. You can never have too many capos!

Harvey Reid, winner of the 1981 National Fingering Guitar Contest, is a pioneer in the use of partial capos and founder of Third Hand and Liberty Flip capos. partialcapo.com

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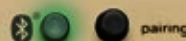
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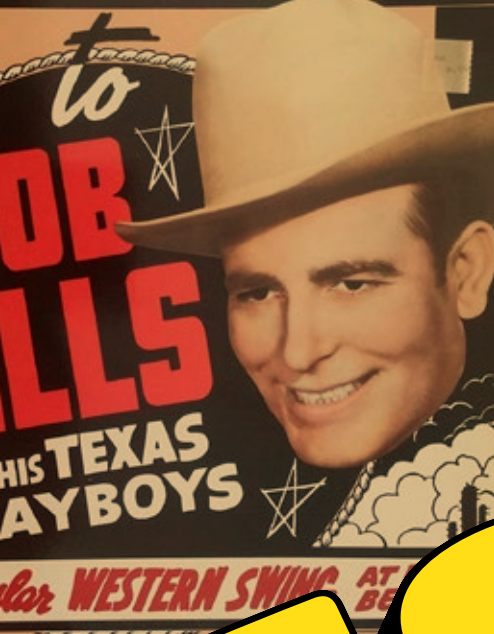
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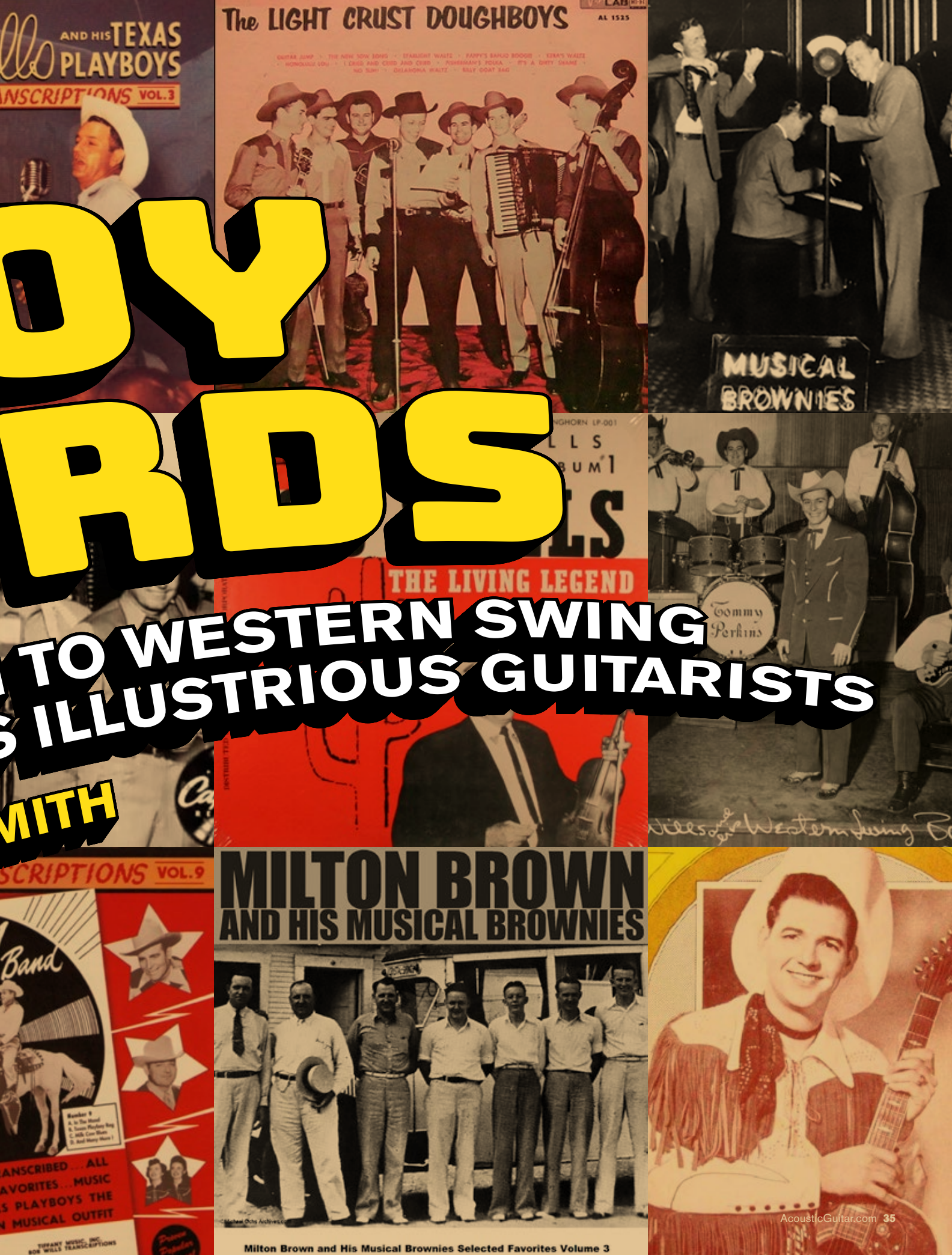


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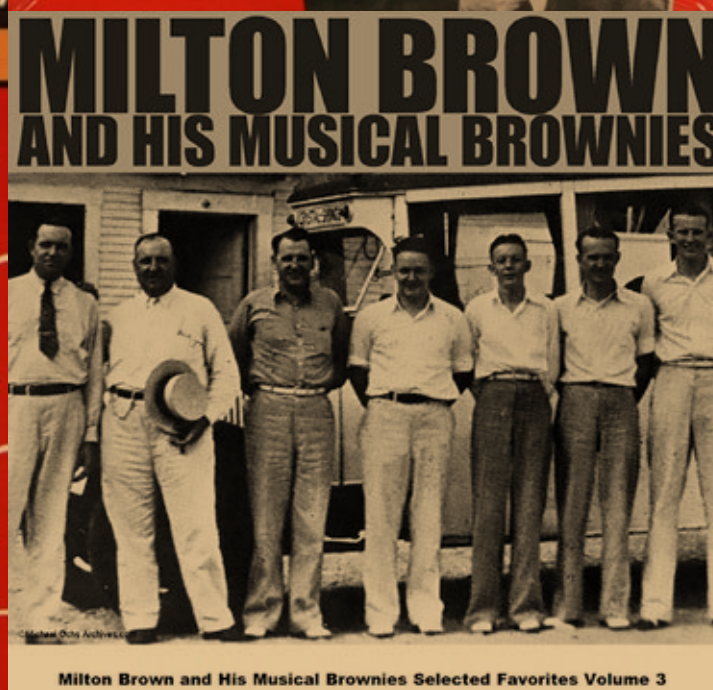




BOY RODS

TO WESTERN SWING ILLUSTRIOUS GUITARISTS

WITH





Carl Kress



The Sons of the Pioneers



The Light Crust Doughboys

The first Western swing record I heard was Bob Wills and the Texas Playboys' *Tiffany Transcriptions, Vol. 1*. I was immediately amazed and hooked. I had been listening to Eddie Lang records and other 1920s and 1930s guitar albums by Carl Kress, Dick McDonough, and George Van Eps. Hearing the "Tiffany Transcriptions," I had an epiphany: I could apply all of my various jazz studies into one dynamic format and start a cool band that lots of people anywhere would like. In my mind the possibilities were endless. Two decades later, I'm still finding new wrinkles in the music through my band, Hot Club of Cowtown.

Western swing developed quickly in the 1930s and '40s from a number of influences: Western life and cowboy culture, various and diverse forms of blues and gospel music, Dixieland jazz and swing, and an all-but-forgotten form of entertainment in traveling tent shows and vaudeville theatre. It's the perfect guitar music. It can accommodate all levels of ability, from rudimentary first-position chords to virtuosic soloing and fretboard gymnastics—making it as fun to hear, or to play and jam on with other musicians, today as it was in 1936.

I'm not an academic historian by a long shot, but I have been a dedicated and determined participant. In this feature, I'll give you an overview of the development of Western swing through the lens of its guitarists, all of which I've gleaned through extensive record collecting and listening, as well as first-hand encounters with musicians like Eldon Shamblin—and of course through playing the music myself for the last two decades.

THE ROOTS OF WESTERN SWING

In the 1930s, recorded music was still a relatively new format, and albums were hard to come by in rural Texas and Oklahoma. Radio was the main

catalyst that brought a variety of styles to the public while promoting regional bands and dances. Musical radio programs, as short as 15 minutes and as long as an hour or more, were underwritten by local and national businesses, including cigarette makers, automobile dealerships, and even baking-flour companies.

The Light Crust Doughboys of the Burrus Mill & Elevator Company began as a radio act in 1931. They were fired after only a few weeks because the company's general manager, W. Lee O'Daniel, didn't like the band's "hillbilly music." But thousands of fans—who were also Light Crust Flour customers—wrote in, demanding the group's return to the airwaves. A compromise was reached, and the Light Crust Doughboys, with personnel changes over the decades, are still playing today.

In the early 1930s, before the evolving style was dubbed Western swing, it was typically referred to as "hot string band" music. At first, it was played mostly for young dancers. I emphasize "young" because many older or family folk in rural Texas would have been happy with just fiddle-band or square dance-type music. The youth, as with every American generation before and after, wanted something they could identify as their own. Wild, raucous jazz that upset their parents was perfect.

Bandleader Milton Brown, who presided over His Musical Brownies, absolutely knew this. Brown could be credited with moving the music's sound and repertoire away from old-timey toward the hot jazz dance-band style. Many other ensembles immediately followed suit, and a new genre was born. Brown's updated set lists included tunes like "Chinatown, My Chinatown," "There'll Be Some Changes Made," "Somebody Stole My Gal," "Who's Sorry Now," and "I'm Confessin'," made popular by Louis Armstrong, Jack Teagarden, Bing Crosby,

and other pop and jazz bands of the day. But Brown also played delightfully raunchy and risqué material: "Somebody's Been Using That Thing," "Garbage Man Blues," and "I'll Be Glad When You're Dead (You Rascal You)."

Milton's younger brother, Derwood Brown, played guitar in the band. Other than an occasional solo on a radio show or recording date where the acoustic guitarist could step up to the microphone and be heard in the controlled environment of the airwaves or a record, the guitar's role was first and foremost to churn out four-to-the-bar rhythm, galvanizing the other instruments into a smooth swinging monster and propelling the singers and soloists to the brink of hysteria. Brown was more than adept at doing all of the above. He also employed bass-line runs between chords that dressed up and animated otherwise basic chord progressions.

This technique was shared by many of the accompanying guitarists of the day. Herman Arnspiger, who played in the Doughboys, and notably with Western swing pioneer Bob Wills, certainly did. Ready examples can be heard on Bob Wills and the Texas Playboys' recordings of "Harmony," "I've Got the Wonder Where She Went Blues," and the Jimmie Rodgers composition, "Gambling Polka Dot Blues."

Listen closely to the background of Brown or early Wills recordings (say, from 1934 to 1936), and you will be treated to the tasty bass runs between chord strums throughout. Derwood can also be heard taking single-note solos on a few tracks. Like most of the guitarists in the early stages of Western swing, he played his blues-based licks very hard, a natural reaction to the typically up-tempo tunes and volume levels of the other instruments. Some guitarists would play punchy triadic solos—an impressive technique in its full harmonic sound and another way to obtain more volume. Singer and



Milton Brown and His Musical Brownies

Eddie Lang

guitarist Bill Boyd played like this on some Roy Newman and His Boys tracks, including “Hot Dog Stomp” (1935).

INTO THE SWING OF IT

Take a quick detour to the jazz world for more triad-based soloing: check out guitarist Dick McDonough’s 1934 version of “Honeysuckle Rose,” and while you’re at it, Emmett Miller’s 1936 version of “Right or Wrong.” Miller had recorded this once before, with the pioneering jazz guitarist Eddie Lang in 1929, and Brown introduced it into the Western swing repertoire in the early 1930s. Wills recorded it later and it became a standard. What is now called trad jazz has always been at the core of Western swing and consistently reveals itself.

The technically advanced tandem of Carl Farr on guitar and Hugh Farr on violin played with the Sons of the Pioneers, the most successful—if not most popular—Western singing group of all time. Their hard-swinging, jazzy approach is reminiscent of that practiced by the formidable duo of Eddie Lang and violinist Joe Venuti. The Sons of the Pioneers performed on countless radio broadcasts, in movies, and on recordings heard by millions of people. Much of the Farr brothers’ work is appropriate musical support, but they were featured as soloists, too, and there are a number of compilations of the Farris just playing instrumentals. Removing the cowboy vocals—as on “Farr Away Blues” and “Deed I Do,” among many others—renders a style that could have been considered pure jazz or blues.

Venuti and Lang were revered by every hot-jazz string musician of the time, and ten years later, next-generation musicians would still be quoting, note for note, whole phrases of theirs. Lang was a master accompanist, fluidly moving the chords around under the melody not unlike a piano player. His playing, which featured

ingenious bass lines connecting the chords, interspersed with dramatic arpeggios, is exciting and advanced by any standard and can still demonstrate how to dress up a simple fiddle tune or otherwise mundane chord progression.

For a good sampling of Venuti and Lang’s seminal work, listen to their recordings “Going Places,” “Doing Things,” and “Wild Cat.” (See a full Eddie Lang transcription, “A Little Love, A Little Kiss,” in the April 2018 issue of AG.) Any list of essential Lang must include “Handful of Riffs,” with the amazing Lonnie Johnson on smoking-hot melody guitar—an unusual pairing for the time, as Johnson was African American, and sadly, interracial collaborations were

The youth, as with every American generation before and after, wanted something they could identify as their own.

extremely rare. Eddie Lang tragically died at the age of 30 in 1933 of complications from a tonsillectomy, but he continues to exert considerable influence on Western swing and on guitarists in general.

Like Lang, Allan Reuss wasn’t a Western swing player, but he was an inspiration to guitarists everywhere through his widely heard and exceptional guitar playing with clarinetist/bandleader Benny Goodman and trombonist Jack Teagarden. An obscure 1941 recording of the pop standard “I Never Knew” under the name Peck’s Bad Boys is a joy to discover. Reuss’ smooth, driving rhythm guitar flows like a river, and he takes an awe-inspiring chord solo on his unamplified Gibson L-5 Premier. He is joined by steel guitar, and for all intents and purposes,

this could have been released as a Western swing record.

Down in San Antonio in the 1930s, violin virtuoso Emilio Caceres made critically acclaimed hot-jazz recordings with his brother Ernie, who would later join the ranks of Goodman and banjoist/guitarist/bandleader Eddie Condon. Listen and compare Caceres’ influential version of “Jig in G” to the raucous mayhem of Bill Boyd’s Cowboy Ramblers treatment of the same tune.

BACK TO THE WILD WEST

In early 1936 the Light Crust Doughboys really stepped things up in the six-string department when a new player, Muryel “Zeke” Campbell, came aboard to join forces with fellow guitarist Dick Reinhart. At that time, the band’s impressive string section also featured Cecil Brower and Kenneth Pitts on violins, as well as the virtuoso plectrum banjoist Smokey Montgomery.

Both Campbell and Reinhart were excellent swing guitarists, delivering powerful, smooth forward motion to the rest of the band. On “Ding Dong Daddy,” they both take solos on their new Martin D-28s—first Campbell and, later in the cut, Reinhart. You can see an amazing film clip of this very band 20 seconds into the 1936 movie *Oh, Susanna!*, where they switch to an extremely fast version of “Tiger Rag,” and everyone solos. Campbell also plays acoustic lead to notable effect on tracks like “Dinah” and “Limehouse Blues.”

Sometime in 1937, Campbell acquired an example of the first commercially successful electric guitar, a Gibson ES-150 with its matching EH-150 amp (the same rig Charlie Christian used in pioneering the role of the jazz soloist in his work with Benny Goodman). Campbell’s soloing quickly evolved into a hip, melodic style—very lyrical and modern, instantly recognizable. With



Bob Wills and his Texas Playboys



Eldon Shamblin



Alan Reuss

his new voice, he could relax and play with the beat, and he began adding harmonic ideas no Western guitarist had demonstrated yet.

Campbell's solos with the Light Crust Doughboys on tracks like "Blue Guitars," "I Had Someone Else Before I Had You," "Dinah," and "Beer Drinking Mama" surely warrant a reassessment of his incredible work, which has received surprisingly little recognition. Johnny Gimble, the legendary Texas swing fiddler and Bob Wills alumnus, witnessed Campbell firsthand as a teenager, and he confirmed with me on several occasions that everyone went nuts whenever the guitarist took a hot solo.

A HUMBLE LEGEND

No list of Western swing musicians, let alone guitar players, is complete without the name Eldon Shamblin. Born in Weatherford, Oklahoma, Shamblin taught himself guitar and music by studying big-band charts and stock arrangements as a teen. During the desperate grimness of the Great Depression, he moved to Oklahoma City, where he played and sang on the radio. Eventually, he ended up in Tulsa, working with Dave Edwards' Alabama Boys and at another radio station, where he arranged classical music pieces into little hot-jazz numbers.

Wills had been adding musicians to his ensemble to keep in step with the big-band craze of the late 1930s, and after hearing what Shamblin could do with sophisticated music like that, he imagined what the guitarist could do with a simple Western tune. Wills eventually convinced Shamblin to join the Texas Playboys as an arranger and guitar player, a position he would hold on and off for over 30 years.

Guitarist Herman Arnspiger remained in the band a number of years, as well, but with a more fiddle-like accompaniment approach. Shamblin, who was always humble, said that

Arnspiger was great at the earlier style, and Uncle John Wills (Bob Wills' father and original fiddle teacher) didn't dig Shamblin's playing at all. But everybody else loved Shamblin. His smooth sound of moving chords behind the melody, filling in with bass runs and ornate flourishes, shows Eddie Lang's influence, but redefined in a style that was all his own.

Shamblin's knowledge of harmony was far more evolved than most musicians in the Western music scene, and he often coached the other members of the band in navigating chords, even teaching them their parts one note

No list of Western swing musicians, let alone guitar players, is complete without the name Eldon Shamblin.

at a time. He joined the band with an odd-looking Rickenbacker Electro-Spanish Model B electric guitar, but Bob Wills soon gave him one of two Gibson Super 400s he'd bought for the band, and Shamblin played this for 18 years until Leo Fender—a huge Bob Wills fan—gave him one of the very first Fender Stratocasters ever made. The Gibson Super 400 was acoustic, but it had a pickup mounted to it that ran to a volume pedal on the floor, another feature that would remain uncommon for years.

There are many great guitar moments from Shamblin on the recordings Bob Wills and the Texas Playboys made between 1933 and 1949. Listen to the bass lines Shamblin plays on "Time Changes Everything" and the ease and natural sophistication he adds to "Honey What You Gonna Do." The instrumental "Taking It Home," on which Shamblin teams up with

Louis Tierney on violin, finds the guitarist playing loose and swinging. Shamblin takes a very nice melodic single-note solo on "I Wish I Could Shimmy Like My Sister Kate," and in the groundbreaking "Bob Wills Special," he and steel guitarist Leon McAuliffe introduce the twin-guitar sound that would become a hallmark of Western swing.

A series of radio transcriptions that Bob Wills and His Texas Playboys made between 1946 and 1948 (those "Tiffany Transcriptions") absolutely captures the group's *joie de vivre* and its diversity of material. The personnel were not always the same on each session, but the cohesion never falters, and everyone is clearly giving all they have on every song. They would play a hoedown like "Smith's Reel," then a Benny Goodman tune, followed by a classic Western piece and an electric version of a Cole Porter song.

These recordings are also excellent examples of how Shamblin's three-part arrangements (guitar, steel, and electric mandolin) could sound like a big-band horn section. They are filled with incredible solos from Tiny Moore, Herb Remington, Junior Barnard, Joe Holley, Tierney, and of course Shamblin.

I hope I have stoked your interest in this fascinating and magnificent era of Western swing, with its brilliant guitar work, which still inspires me—even after playing it professionally on the road over a hundred nights a year for the last 21 years and counting.

Special thanks to Cary Ginell and Rich Kienzle for their liner notes and books, which guided me and taught me so much right from the beginning.

Whit Smith is a member of the Western swing group Hot Club of Cowtown and author of the Chordination series of instructional videos. whitsmithmusic.com

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The Sons of the Pioneers, featuring Karl Farr (left) and Roy Rogers (right), in *The Big Show* (1936)

REPUBLIC PICTURES

How the West Was Swung

Learn some essential Western swing accompaniment moves

BY WHIT SMITH WITH ADAM PERLMUTTER

Western swing has certainly been an outlet for virtuosic expression on the guitar—like Karl Farr’s sophisticated, jazzy approach and Eldon Shamblin’s athletic single-note solos. But in the genre’s first decades, the 1930s and ’40s, the acoustic guitar was used primarily to deliver rock-solid rhythmic accompaniment, with nothing too ornate on display.

That’s not to say that this accompaniment is rudimentary. The celebrated early jazz guitarist Eddie Lang has been a hero to many Western swing guitarists, myself certainly included, and his influence is heard in the sophisticated harmonic approach that is typical of the genre. In this lesson, I’ll share a selection of these chordal and rhythmic devices, in both short progressions and longer structures—cool ideas to have under your fingers and in your ears, no matter what style you play.

FOUR AND MORE

The duty of a guitar player in a classic Western swing group is first and foremost to play four-to-the-bar rhythm, not unlike how the jazz guitarist Freddie Green handled comping in his nearly half-century gig with the Count Basie Orchestra. This concept is shown with a I–V (G6–D7/A) progression in the key of G major in **Example 1**. To play it, use whatever grips are most comfortable for you—look at the accompanying video to see which ones I prefer—and beginning in bar 1, strum all in brisk downstrokes, squarely on each beat.

It’s important to note that the exact way you approach swing rhythm is a matter of personal preference. Every player has his or her own touch. Some like to hit beats 2 and 4 a little heavier than 1 and 3. My personal preference is to try to smooth things out a little bit, as I do throughout the video for this lesson—using,

incidentally, my 1929 Gibson L-5, which has been refinished to blonde from sunburst. (I also have a 1928 L-5 that sounds lovely, and a 1946 model that I use on the road with Hot Club of Cowtown.)

In any case, just as important to Western swing as the four-to-the-bar rhythm is a relatively sophisticated harmonic palette. It’s important to know a bunch of different chord voicings and inversions (chords with notes other than roots in the bass)—and how to move them around and link them—because it’s fun and it sounds good.

In **Example 2**, for instance, note how I use inversions and a chromatic passing chord like C#dim7 for the progression of G9/B–C6–C#dim7–G/D, in which the chord roots smoothly ascend in half-steps. Speaking of inversions, in Western swing, instead of a



Example 1

G⁶ *play four times* D^{7/A} G D^{7/A}

Example 2

G G^{9/B} C⁶ C^{#dim7} G/D D^{7/A} G/B G

Example 3

G/D G/B G/D

Example 4a

G D^{7/A} G/B C⁶ G/D C⁶ G/B D^{7/A} G

Example 4b

G D^{7/A} G/B C⁶ G/D C⁶ G/B D^{7/A} G

Example 5

G D^{7/A} G/B G^{7/F} C/D C^{#dim7} E^{m7/D} G/B

G D^{7/A} G/B B^{dim7} A/C[#] A^{7/G} D^{9/F#} D⁷

G chord played as an open voicing or a third-fret barre grip, it is common to use compact voicings like those shown in **Example 3**, none of which is in root position.

Another typical accompaniment device in Western swing is to harmonize the notes of a melodic or scalar passage. **Example 4a** depicts the G major scale from the root (G) to the fifth (D) and back, all along string 6, while **Example 4b** harmonizes the scale with the I, IV, and V chords (G and G/B, C6, and D7/A, respectively).

STRETCHING OUT

Now have a look at how a typical Western swing rhythm approach works in a longer context. Sticking with the key of G major, **Example 5** takes its cue from Bob Wills and His Texas Playboys' "Roly Poly," which was an immediate hit upon the release of the original 1946 version and has since become a Western swing standard.

Your first order of business in learning Ex. 5 is to make sure that all of the chord grips are in your

muscle memory. The good news is that a bunch of the same grips are used to make different chords. For example, in bar 3, the shape for the C#dim7 chord—which I recommend grabbing with your second, first, and third fingers on strings 6, 4, and 3, respectively—is identical to the shapes for D7/A in bar 5 and Bdim7 in the following measure, albeit played at different frets.

You might have noticed that most of the chords in Ex. 5—and throughout this lesson—have just three or four notes (and occasionally only two). That works well because these chords contain just the essential harmonic information, typically without any doubled notes. The G/B chord in bar 2, for instance, is spelled, lowest note to highest, B (third), G (root), and D (fifth). To hear how clean and uncluttered this voicing sounds, compare it to any six-note G chord.

While not conveyed in notation in this lesson, Western swing accompaniment makes good use of muted strings for percussive effect. I play that G/B chord with my third, first, and

fourth fingers on strings 6, 4, and 3, respectively, with string 5 muted by the pad of my third finger. When I strum strings 6–3, I get a punchy, driving effect. Also note that while in most bars in Ex. 5 I switch chords every two beats, I don't always strum every note in a grip. I often hit just the root on beat 1 or 3, and this makes for a more interesting texture.

One last thought for playing Ex. 5, and for Western swing guitar in general: Remember that your most important role is to play that rock-steady rhythm, so it's less of an offense to omit a chord here or there than it is to inadvertently slow down when switching between chords.

SWITCHING KEYS AND CHORDS

Now let's move to the more horn-friendly key of F major for a few more examples. A fun thing to do when you have a progression with one chord per bar is to play two different voicings per measure. For a basic series of chords traveling backwards on the circle of fifths—say D7–G7–C7–F—you could just play basic open and barre

Example 5 shows a sequence of chords and fretting patterns for guitar. The notation is divided into three systems, each with a treble clef staff for chords and a bass staff for fretting patterns.

System 1 (Measures 9-12):

- Measure 9: Chord G. Fretting: 9, 9, 9, 9.
- Measure 10: Chord Gmaj7. Fretting: 9, 9, 9, 9.
- Measure 11: Chord G6. Fretting: 7, 7, 5, 5.
- Measure 12: Chord G. Fretting: 5, 5, 3, 3.

System 2 (Measures 13-16):

- Measure 13: Chord C. Fretting: 5, 5, 5, 5.
- Measure 14: Chord C#dim7. Fretting: 5, 5, 3, 3.
- Measure 15: Chord G. Fretting: 4, 4, 5, 5.
- Measure 16: Chord Am7. Fretting: 5, 5, 0, 0.

System 3 (Measures 17-20):

- Measure 17: Chord G/B. Fretting: 7, 7, 6, 6.
- Measure 18: Chord Bdim7. Fretting: 5, 5, 4, 4.
- Measure 19: Chord D7/A. Fretting: 3, 3, 5, 5.
- Measure 20: Chord G. Fretting: 7, 7, 10, 10.

System 4 (Measures 21-24):

- Measure 21: Chord A#dim7. Fretting: 7, 7, 10, 10.
- Measure 22: Chord G/B. Fretting: 7, 7, 10, 10.
- Measure 23: Chord G7/D. Fretting: 7, 7, 10, 10.
- Measure 24: Chord C. Fretting: 9, 9, 9, 9.

System 5 (Measures 25-28):

- Measure 25: Chord C. Fretting: 9, 9, 9, 9.
- Measure 26: Chord Caug/G#. Fretting: 10, 10, 10, 10.
- Measure 27: Chord Am7. Fretting: 10, 10, 11, 11.
- Measure 28: Chord A#dim7. Fretting: 12, 12, 13, 13.

System 6 (Measures 29-32):

- Measure 29: Chord G/B. Fretting: 12, 12, 10, 10.
- Measure 30: Chord D7/A. Fretting: 12, 12, 11, 11.
- Measure 31: Chord G. Fretting: 8, 8, 7, 7.
- Measure 32: Chord Bm/F#. Fretting: 7, 7, 9, 9.



21

Em7 G A7/C# A7 D7/A Am Am(b6) Am6 C/D D7 D7/c

25

G/B D7/A G G7/F C/E C#dim7 Em7/D Am7

29

G/B Bdim7 Am7 D7/A G D7/A A#dim7 G/B Am/c G/D

Example 6

D7 D7/c G9/B G7 C7/Bb C7/G F

Example 7

Bb/D Bb6 F/c F/A G7 C7/G F

chords. But in a Western swing setting, for something with a more refined sound, kind of dark and tight, you could play voicings like the ones in **Example 6**.

If you see a B \flat chord on a chart for a Western swing tune, you might be tempted to play a B \flat barre chord at the first or sixth fret. But you might think about other options and instead start with a B \flat chord high up the neck, with the third in the bass, then move down to a B \flat 6 chord with the root (B \flat) in the bass, as in **Example 7**.

I'll close things out with a figure depicting the sorts of moves you might find in a fancier Western swing accompaniment (**Example 8**). Things kick off in the pickup measure with a single-note, chromatically descending line that sets up some V- and ii-chord action via the C9/E, Gm7/F, and C7/G chords.

Bars 3–5 and 7–9 illustrate a cool concept—how to slowly get from the I chord to the V in different ways in a Western swing setting. In measures 3 and 4, I harmonize a descending stepwise line starting on the F

chord's third (A) and ending on the flatted seventh (E \flat), then move up by a half step to land on the C9/E chord's third (E) at the top of bar 5. Bars 7–9 take a similar approach, but in a lower octave and with leaner voicings.

With any luck, you'll be inspired to use these Western swing accompaniment ideas in your music. Do remember that learning the chord shapes is perhaps the easy part, but developing the proper rhythmic feel can take years of careful listening and playing with seasoned Western swing and jazz players. **AC**

Example 8

Example 8 is a 16-measure Western swing accompaniment in 4/4 time, in the key of B \flat major (two flats). The notation is presented in a single system with a treble staff and a bass staff. The treble staff contains a single-note line, and the bass staff contains a descending chromatic line. Chord symbols are placed above the staff, and the bass staff includes fret numbers and bar lines.

Measures 1-4: C9/E, Gm7/F, C7/G, G \sharp aug, F/A, C7/G, F, F7/E \flat . The bass staff shows a descending chromatic line starting on F (10) and ending on E \flat (6).

Measures 5-8: C9/E, B \flat /D, C7, B \flat 6, F/A, C7/G, F, F \sharp dim7. The bass staff shows a descending chromatic line starting on E (8) and ending on D \flat (2).

Measures 9-12: C7/G, F, Fmaj7, F7. The bass staff shows a descending chromatic line starting on D (3) and ending on C (0).

Measures 13-16: B \flat /D, Bdim7, Dm7/C, D7, G7, C7, F. The bass staff shows a descending chromatic line starting on B \flat (5) and ending on F (1).

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BILL EVANS

Increasing Harmony

How to build chords and use them in progression

BY GRETCHEN MENN

THE PROBLEM

You've worked to build a solid foundation of music theory, yet need to connect a few more dots in order to feel confident with how the various elements fit together and how to create music with them.

THE SOLUTION

Study the fundamentals of diatonic harmony: understand the theory, then apply it to the fretboard.

First, my congratulations! You have arrived at the last lesson of this series. What you've accomplished is no small feat. In our previous lessons, you've studied elements of pitch and rhythm, worked on understanding key and time signatures, achieved greater fretboard familiarity, and tackled numerous assignments and exercises that required a significant expenditure of time, patience, and focus. The purpose of this lesson is to draw

together the pieces of what we've discussed thus far, apply them as we look at some principles of diatonic harmony, and get you using what you've learned to play and write *music*.

This is another dense lesson, so I recommend a few deep breaths, earplugs if you're someplace noisy, and caffeine or some exercise if you're not fully alert. Once you're ready, have at it!

1 BUILD MAJOR KEY TRIADS

Western tonal music is fundamentally about tension and release. There are countless ways to navigate between these areas, traversing shades of tension and degrees of resolve through **harmonic progression**—the movement of one chord to another.

As you have seen, every key has an associated scale. Every scale degree has an associated triad. We have derived some diatonic chords in the blues lesson, but let's take a closer look now, starting with the major mode. The **tonic**, or chord built on the first scale degree, represents

the place of stable musical repose. The **dominant**, built on the fifth degree, is its counterpart—the chord of tension. The **subdominant** chord is built on the fourth degree and often precedes the dominant in harmonic progression. While tonic, subdominant, and dominant chords all have specific meanings (the I, IV, and V, respectively), each chord in a key has a function that falls into one of these categories.

Let's take a look at the chords that result from building a triad on each scale degree. Write out a C major scale, as shown in **Example 1**. We will spell each chord upwards from the root. Start with scale degree 1 to find the tonic chord, C. C is the root of the chord. Skip one scale degree to get the third, E. Skip another scale degree for the fifth, G. Remembering what you learned in the previous lesson, look at the intervals to determine the quality of the chord: C to E is a M3, and C to G is a P5, so the tonic chord in the key of C major is—you guessed it—a C major triad. Seems intuitive enough, but now you know why.

Move to the second scale degree. D is the root. Skip up a scale degree to get the third, F, and another to get the fifth, A. Now analyze the intervals upwards from the root: a m3 and a P5, or a D minor triad. Continue that procedure for all the scale degrees (**Example 2**). The chord quality associated with each scale degree will be the same across all major keys, so it's well worth it to fix them in your mind. With only one exception, all chords within the major mode are major or minor. The chord built on the seventh scale degree—in this case B—is diminished, as B to D is a m3, and B to F is a dim5.

2 REPEAT WITH MINOR KEY CHORDS

Using the same process as in Ex. 2, we'll build the triads of A minor, the relative minor of C major, as shown in **Example 3**. Like in the major mode, the chord qualities you've derived will be the same across all minor keys. As you might have deduced, relative keys share the same notes and therefore the same chords. Context and progression are what allow us to hear them as independent keys.

Often the minor mode will borrow the **leading tone** (seventh scale degree) from the parallel major mode (e.g., A minor borrows the note G# from A major, as conveyed in **Example 4a**). The leading tone is a very active note, as the half step between it and the tonic creates a strong pull upwards toward resolve. By adopting the leading tone from A major, the dominant chord in the minor mode becomes major and gravitates more strongly toward the tonic—compare the progression with the natural seventh, as in the first measure of **Example 4b**, to that with the raised seventh in the next measure.



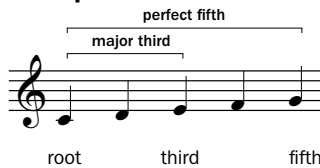
3 FORM SOME MAJOR KEY PROGRESSIONS

Now let's look at some common progressions and transfer them to the fretboard, using just the top four strings. Not only are these voicings useful aesthetically (play them, and hear what I mean), but approaching chords this way will force you to focus on the concepts, rather than falling back on familiar shapes.

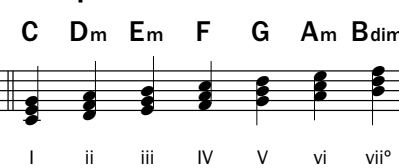
Begin by building all the chords in G major (Example 5). Then take the ubiquitous I-IV-V-I progression, found across the spectrum of genres: rock, blues, country, folk, soul, indie, classical/baroque, to name just a few. Example 6a shows the progression starting in the third position. Example 6b moves it up to the fifth position, Example 6c to seventh position, and Example 6d to tenth position. As you play through these

chords, use your harmonic knowledge to identify their notes, find them on the neck, and relate them to the harmony. Don't just go by the tabature, as that defeats the purpose of the exercise and robs you of the experience of putting your efforts into action. Notice how each individual voice moves to the next—take your time so you can really see and hear it. These small movements (also called voice leading) make for smoothly

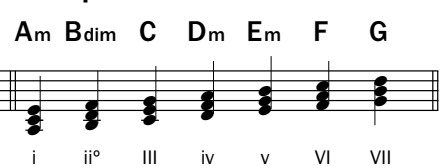
Example 1



Example 2



Example 3



Example 4a

A natural minor scale

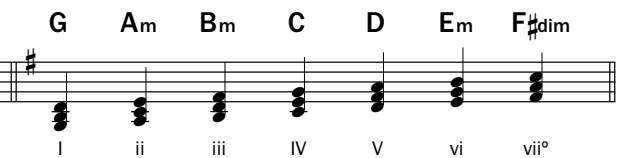
A major scale



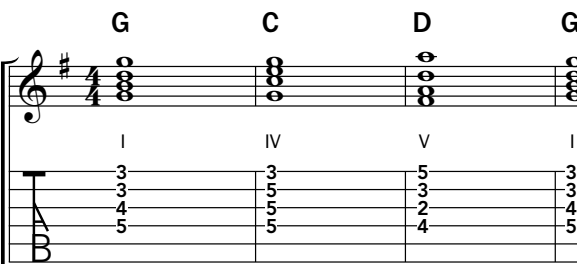
Example 4b



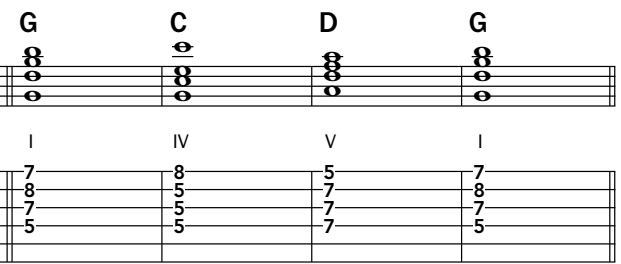
Example 5



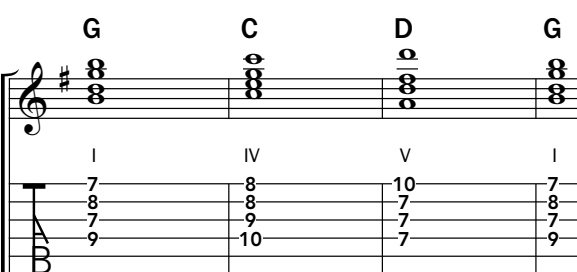
Example 6a



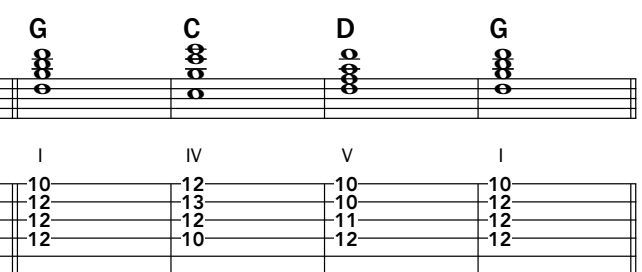
Example 6b



Example 6c



Example 6d



connected chord transitions. Next, work through the ii–V–I, one of the most common progressions in jazz and popular music in general, as shown in the key of G in Examples 7a–7d.

4 CLOSE OUT WITH MINOR PROGRESSIONS

Let's move to the key of E minor. First, write out the E minor scale and associated chords (Example 8). Example 9a shows the i–iv–v–i progression (Em–Am–Bm–Em). As you build these minor chords, notice their close relation to their major counterparts. Find the third(s) in each voicing and move it up a half step, transforming the triad from minor to major. For instance, take the first Em voicing of Ex. 9a, move the Gs on strings 1 and 4 up by one fret each (to G#), and you'll recognize your E major triad.

Example 9b, also in E minor, is identical to Ex. 9a, except that it uses the major V chord (in this case, B). Make your way up the neck, independently discovering the chord voicings in each position for the progression. Finding them for yourself with the knowledge you've been building is hugely beneficial.

Example 10 is yet another progression in E minor, this time using the leading tone of D#, resulting in the harmonies vii° and V. To get that diminished chord better in your brain and under your fingers, remember that it's just a minor triad with a lowered fifth. So you can always start with the more familiar minor chord and move the fifth(s) down by a half step.

For the last set of chords, try another very typical major progression that mixes major and minor diatonic triads: I–vi–ii–V–I, this time in the key of A major. Write out the scale and chords first on your own. You've already worked through ii–V–I movements in Ex. 7, so it's just a question of adding the vi chord. Example 11 will get you started, and then you

Western tonal music is fundamentally about tension and release. There are countless ways to navigate between these areas, traversing shades of tension and degrees of resolve through harmonic progression—the movement of one chord to another.

can proceed independently. Once you have these chord progressions down, try them in every key. Work on building the chord forms on the middle four strings and bottom four strings. Then try repeating the process with different chord progressions.

These should not be seen as exercises to go through a few times and then considered checked off an educational to-do list. Spend time with them, and be patient. Try exercises like these for an hour a day for a month, and watch your chord vocabulary, fluency, and neck familiarity skyrocket.

Then write your own progressions. A lot of them. Doing so engages you actively and creatively, deepens the learning, and results in the reward of something that is musically yours. I bet you'll discover many new ideas in the process, and that's the point—when done with the right intention and attitude, study increases inspiration and provides tools for the freer expression of ideas.

I thank you for letting me be a small part of your musical journey in this series. Music has one of the highest benefit-to-risk ratios out there—it has the power to delight, inspire, comfort, and unite. Yet the most common downside is that certain types might not appeal to you aesthetically. So be fearless as you learn and grow, knowing you'll harm no one. Invest in your musical fluency, cultivate your imagination, develop your sound, and create from your highest self. You never know how you might affect the world positively.

Gretchen Menn is a guitarist and composer based in the San Francisco Bay Area. She writes, records, and performs original music, and is the guitarist of a popular Led Zeppelin tribute band, Zepparella. gretchenmenn.com

Example 7a

Am	D	G	Am	D	G
ii	V	I	ii	V	I
5	5	3	5	5	7
5	3	3	5	7	8
5	2	4	5	7	7
2	4	5	7	7	5

Example 7b

Example 7c

Am	D	G	Am	D	G
ii	V	I	ii	V	I
8	10	7	12	10	10
10	7	8	10	10	12
9	7	7	9	11	12
7	7	9	10	12	12

Example 7d



Example 8

Em F#dim G Am Bm C D

i ii° III iv v VI VII

Example 9a

Example 9b

Em Am Bm Em Em Am B Em

i iv v i i iv V i

Example 10

Em C D#dim B Em

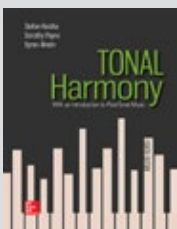
i VI vii° V i

Example 11

A F#m Bm E A

I vi ii V I

ESSENTIAL READING



As I send you off on the next phase of your journey, I want to give you my recommendations for what I consider essential reading material.

Tonal Harmony, Stefan Kostka, Dorothy Payne, Byron Almen

My go-to reference for clear, concise, comprehensive harmony and theory.

Zen Guitar, Philip Toshio Sudo

You'll find no theoretical or guitar-specific exercises, but rather a

wealth of wisdom to prime your attitude and approach along the lifelong path of music.

Peak: Secrets from the New Science of Expertise, Anders Ericsson and Robert Pool

Well-researched, with solid scientific data, this book convincingly dispels many myths and unhelpful notions about talent and expertise.

The Obstacle Is the Way, Ryan Holiday

Based in Stoic philosophy, this provides wisdom on how we perceive and confront challenges.



The Light Crust Doughboys

Tiger Rag

The Light Crust Doughboys'
barn-burning Western
swing classic

BY ADAM PERLMUTTER

For a brief moment, I didn't understand what all the fuss was about. "Tiger Rag," as performed by the pioneering Western swing act the Light Crust Doughboys, is known for its raging tempo, but it didn't seem all that forbidding. That's when I realized that I was playing along with audio software that was unintentionally set at half speed. Needless to say, it's a challenge to keep up when played back at full speed.

The Doughboys can be seen playing their adaptation of the old jazz tune "Tiger Rag" in *Oh, Susanna!*, the 1936 film by director Joseph Kane, starring Gene Autry. Not only does the clip offer a glimpse into how exciting this spirited new music must have seemed to audiences in the mid-1930s, it features guitarists Muryel "Zeke" Campbell and Dick Reinhart on their recently made Martin D-28s, giving steel-string aficionados a sense of how these coveted instruments, now aged to perfection, sounded when new.

Grab a flatpick and a metronome and set aside a generous amount of time in the woodshed, as in this lesson you'll work on the blazing guitar leads and swinging rhythmic accompaniment from "Tiger Rag"—and, if you're up for it, a sampling of the fiddle soloing, arranged in a guitar-friendly way.

THE FIDDLE SOLO AND VOCAL THEME

The notation here accounts for the *Oh, Susanna!* performance of "Tiger Rag" from beginning to end. First up is the fiddle part played by Kenneth "Abner" Pitts. This part is technically doable on the guitar (at least one with a 14th-fret neck junction) at the same pitch level as the violin—the highest note would be the 17th-fret A on string 1—but it's much more practical and idiomatic an octave lower, where the availability of open strings makes it easier on the fretting hand. Transposing it down also makes it more seamless to transition to and from the two brief guitar fills in bars 32–33 and 40–41.

I often remind students that the best way to learn to play something fast is by practicing it slowly, and that advice is especially relevant for tackling this piece. No matter your proficiency level, I'd recommend using a metronome and starting at a low bpm setting—try 160 (80 half notes), or whatever tempo is needed in order for you to read through the music and play it cleanly and in rhythm.



Tackle the solo phrase by phrase or measure by measure. Use whatever sequence of pick strokes feels most natural to you, but make sure to use the exact same ones every time. Pencil them in the notation if you'd like. If a particular area is vexing—I find bars 20–21 to be especially challenging compared to the rest of the arrangement—then isolate it and practice it in a loop. Work out the kinks and gradually bring each separate portion up to tempo before playing the fiddle solo from beginning to end. For an added challenge, try transposing it up an octave.

In measures 50–60 you'll find a welcome reprieve from the demanding fiddle solo—an arrangement of the comping, as played by guitarists Campbell and Reinhart. This is the chordal structure that forms the backbone of the proceeding instrumental solos (guitar, bass, and banjo). (For a full lesson on Western swing rhythm guitar, see Whit Smith's excellent lesson on page 40.) In the film scene, the guitarists mix things up here—sometimes playing boom-chuck or just four-to-the-bar chord strums, and other times laying out. The most important thing to do when playing this part is to maintain a sense of energy and forward motion.

Another notable detail is the slide up to the sixth-string B \flat at the end of bars 49 and 52. That slide is a part of the traditional versions of "Tiger Rag," and is usually played by the trombone and piano. The ragtime and early jazz pianist and composer Jelly Roll Morton described that part as "sounding like

a tiger howling" and is what gave the tune its name, according to Morton, whose tales were known to be semi-true.

THE GUITAR SOLO

And now what you've been waiting for: Campbell's barn-burning guitar solo is transcribed note for note. This part will probably feel easier than the fiddle solo. That's obviously partly because it was originally played on the guitar, but also because it makes more frequent use of repeated notes—like the pair of Ds at the beginning—as well as rests.

If you have a reasonable amount of technical proficiency on the guitar and take things slowly, as with the other sections, the guitar solo should fall into place. A quick scan of the notation reveals that the solo skips around a bit in terms of position. So you might work on the phrase or phrases in each position before stringing everything together. For instance, begin by practicing the solo's first four bars in sixth position, with your first, second, third, and fourth fingers covering the notes on frets 6, 7, 8, and 9, respectively. Make sure you can play those measures with confidence before shifting up to tenth position for measures 99–108.

Once you've tackled the wealth of hot Western swing moves found in "Tiger Rag," remember that your work doesn't end there. Your ultimate goal is to commit to memory the ideas you find most compelling and practice them in other keys, so that you'll have them in your arsenal for that next jam session. **AC**

Fiddle Solo

Fast $\text{♩} = \text{c. } 166$

First system of the Fiddle Solo. The treble clef staff shows the melody with notes and rests, and the bass clef staff shows the fretting with numbers. Chords C, G, and C are indicated above the staff.

Second system of the Fiddle Solo, marked with a first ending bracket (1.). The treble clef staff shows the melody, and the bass clef staff shows the fretting. Chords G, C, D, G, D, G, D, and G are indicated above the staff.

Third system of the Fiddle Solo, marked with a second ending bracket (2.). The treble clef staff shows the melody, and the bass clef staff shows the fretting. Chords D, G, C, F, and N.C. are indicated above the staff.

Fourth system of the Fiddle Solo. The treble clef staff shows the melody, and the bass clef staff shows the fretting. Chords F, C, and F are indicated above the staff.

Fifth system of the Fiddle Solo. The treble clef staff shows the melody, and the bass clef staff shows the fretting. Chords G, C N.C., and C are indicated above the staff. A guitar part is indicated by a dashed line and the word "guitar" below the staff.

Cont. on p. 52

Cont. from p. 51

36

F C F N.C. C

guitar

43

F Bb C F

(guitar)

Theme

50

Bb play six times F7 play eight times Bb N.C. Bb play six times

55

Eb play three times Ebm Bb G7 C7

60

F Bb F7 Fiddle Solo Guitar Solo Bb



97 F7

103

Bb N.C. Bb

109

Eb Bb

116

Bass Solo Banjo Solo

122 G7 C7 F Bb F7



COURTESY OF SHUBB CAPOS

Pocket Transposer

How to use the capo to play music in all 12 keys—and more

BY JAMIE STILLWAY

The capo is a small but powerful tool that can be found in most guitarists' piles of miscellaneous guitar picks and accessories. When you ask folks if they know how to use a capo, the answer is often: "Sure, you put it on, and it makes the guitar sound higher, right?" While that is true, in order to fully comprehend the capo's role as a pocket-size transposition machine and more, knowing exactly where to place it for different keys is an invaluable skill. For instance, have you been at a jam when someone calls out a tune in the key of E \flat and panicked, as you thought it might be a good time for a capo, but had no idea how to use it in a pinch? This lesson aims to remedy that situation.

WEEK ONE

Essentially, the capo functions as a nut and when placed on the neck, transposes, or raises the notes of the open strings but retains the individual relationships between strings. With the aid of a capo, you can know only three open chords and easily play in all 12 keys. In order to get the most benefit out of your capo, a small amount of music theory will go a long way. At a bare minimum, you should understand intervals, or the distances between notes. For instance, that the note a minor second (one fret) higher than C is C \sharp ; that a major third (four frets) above E is G \sharp . It's also useful to have a knowledge of the Roman numeral system used to label chord progressions independently of key

signatures—I-IV-V, I-vi-ii-V, etc. (You can learn all about these fundamentals in Gretchen Menn's recent series of Basics lessons.)

The easiest way to get comfortable with your capo is to start simply, with just one chord. Looking at **Example 1**, if you were to place a capo at the second fret and strum an open A chord, it would sound as B. Play the same A chord with the capo at the third fret and it sounds as C; move the capo up an additional fret and the chord sounds as C \sharp .

This idea repeats with every chord shape on the neck. As long as you have a basic familiarity with the fretboard and are able to reference some familiar guideposts, such as the root note of each chord shape, you can figure out a



variety of ways to play any given chord with the capo. In the case of that open A shape, with its fifth-string root, can you figure out what the chord would sound as with a capo at the seventh fret? I encourage you to pause and think about it. Hopefully, your answer is E.

Now let's extend the concept to a common chord progression: I-IV-V-I or C-F-G-C, as notated in the key of C major in **Example 2**. If you clamp on the capo at the second fret, the progression will sound a major second higher (D-G-A-D); the third fret, a minor third higher (E♭-A♭-B♭-E♭); and so on. Try placing the capo

at other frets when playing Ex. 2, and see if you can correctly identify the sounding chords.

Next, try playing the I-IV-V-I progression with a different set of chords, A (I), D (IV), and E (V), as shown in **Example 3**. If you were to place a capo at the third fret, the chords would sound a minor third higher than written, in the key of C, or the same as Ex. 2 without a capo. Before proceeding to the next example, play through Ex. 3 with the capo at various locations. Wrap up this week's exercises by starting the same I-IV-V-I progression on a sixth-string-rooted chord, G (**Example 4**).

See if you can figure out how to use the capo to transpose the figure to the keys of A and C. (Answer: place the capo at fret 2 for A and fret 5 for C.) Repeat the process for the I-IV-V-I progression in E notated in **Example 5**.

In order to really let these ideas sink in, take a song you are already familiar with and find other ways to play it with your capo. If you have a guitar-playing friend, try jamming on a song wherein you each play in a different position. One of you can use a capo, or you can each capo in a different location. As the capo also changes the tonal range of the guitar, you

WEEK 1

Example 1

Capo II		Capo III		Capo IV	
Fingered:	Sounds:	Fingered:	Sounds:	Fingered:	Sounds:
A	B	A	C	A	C♯

Example 2

C F G C

Example 3

A D E A

Example 4

G C D G

Example 5

E A B E

Beginners' Tip #1

Find a capo that snugly fits the radius of your fretboard and presses all six strings evenly. Before playing, check your tuning, sounding each open string to ensure that it is ringing freely.

may find some interesting combinations. See what you come up with!

WEEK TWO

One of the capo's biggest advantages is that it can make playing songs in non-guitar-friendly keys—like A \flat or D \flat —more playable. This is especially true of music that requires the extensive use of barre chords, which can place undue strain on your fretting hand.

In other words, you needn't fear barre chords anymore—let the capo do all the heavy lifting.

For example, what do you do if you look up a song on the internet and see that it has

a chord progression of Fm–B \flat m? As all the same rules that we've discussed obviously apply to minor keys, you've got options! One of the easiest solutions would be to play Em and Am in the open position and use a capo at the first fret, causing the chords to sound as Fm and B \flat m, as shown in **Example 6**. Note that in this and all subsequent examples, the music is written as if there weren't a capo, and that the zeros in tablature actually represent the fret that the capo is on.

What if you were going to strum a I–vi–ii–V progression in E, but didn't feel comfortable with your C \sharp and F \sharp minor barre chords?

Example 7 shows one possibility: playing in a C position with your capo at the fourth fret. If a song calls for arpeggios and you see Bm and F \sharp listed as the chords, you could put the capo on the second fret and play with more manageable shapes in the first position, as in **Example 8**.

The capo isn't used just to get out of playing in certain keys and barre chords. You could, for instance, finger a I–vi progression in G (G–Em) without a capo using standard open

grips. But when you place a capo at the seventh fret and use open C and Am shapes, the chords sound as G and Em—while taking on a fresh timbre. Try it for yourself by playing the Travis-picked **Example 9**. (For more on Travis picking, see my lessons in the December 2017 and January 2019 issues of AG.)

WEEK THREE

You've been focusing on playing chords with the capo, but this week will be about incorporating scales and melodies. Whether you are a flatpicker or a fingerpicker, the capo can be used to make soloing in different keys more manageable. For example, many bluegrass players prefer to play in open G position, so if a song is in the key of B \flat they might place the

Beginners' Tip #2

If you see "Capo V" indicated on a piece of guitar music, it means that the capo is to be placed on the fifth fret.

WEEK 2

Example 6

*Capo I

Em

Am

*Music sounds a minor second higher than written.

Example 7

*Capo IV

C

Am

Dm

G

*Music sounds a major third higher than written.

Example 8

*Capo II

Am

E

*Music sounds a major second higher than written.

Example 9

*Capo VII

C

Am

*Music sounds a perfect fifth higher than written.



capo on the third fret to take advantage of the open strings they normally use in G.

Example 10 mimics some common bluegrass runs, fingered without the capo, in B \flat . Playing in this key in the first position can be a little awkward, especially considering bluegrass' customarily brisk tempos. **Example 11** is the exact same idea, but played out of a G position, with the capo at the third fret. The open strings make the run easier to play, promoting more fluid phrasing.

A familiar melody like "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" might be a cinch in a guitar-friendly

key, but what if I asked you to play it in A \flat ? I can almost hear your groans of disbelief. You could certainly play it without the capo, as shown in **Example 12**. But now place a capo at the first

fret, play "Twinkle" in G, and it will sound in A \flat (**Example 13**). Did it get any easier? I'll bet it did.

WEEK FOUR

Of course, capo use isn't limited to just standard tuning. In order to tie together all the ideas presented in this lesson, I've written a short etude in open-D tuning (D A D F \sharp A D). **Example 14** (p. 58) is capoed at the sixth fret, with a mix of strummed chords and single notes. Have you figured out what key it sounds in? (The answer is A \flat .) This etude, which can be played either with a pick or fingerstyle, contains a lot of space

Beginners' Tip #3

Enharmonic keys are written differently but identical in pitch. For instance, F \sharp major is the same as G \flat major.

WEEK 3

Example 10

B \flat E \flat F B \flat

Example 11

*Capo III

G C D G

*Music sounds a minor third higher than written.

Example 12

Example 13

*Capo I

*Music sounds a minor second higher than written.

Beginners' Tip #4

It's a good idea to have a least one major scale—the basis of Western music—under your fingers in open position. In conjunction with a capo, you can get a whole lot of mileage out of that scale.

for your own exploration of new sounds. Note how not only is the guitar's tonality affected by the nonstandard tuning, its timbre is transformed when the capo is placed in the middle of the neck like this.

It's important to remember that using a capo is not a sign of weakness or ineptitude, it is simply a tool that helps you capitalize on the guitar's inherent strengths. Of course, you could take a very basic approach to the capo and simply place it

wherever sounds good to you, but hopefully you have acquired some skills to use the device to its full potential. Be patient with yourself, as there are a lot of things to think about when using the capo as a transposing and arranging tool. And always remember that music should be fun!

Jamie Stillway is a fingerstyle guitarist and educator based in Portland, Oregon. jamiestillway.com

WEEK 4

Example 14

*Tuning: D A D F# A D, Capo VI

let ring throughout

*Music sounds a tritone higher than written.



TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL

Once you have the basics mastered, it's fun to experiment with less-traditional uses of the capo, like partial capoing, which can offer you access to chordal moves that would be otherwise difficult or impossible to play. In this example, which sounds in the key of E

major, the capo is placed at the fourth fret, covering only strings 1–5. If you play a Cmaj7 shape with the open sixth string, you get a big-sounding Emaj7 chord. (For more on partial capoing, see the Weekly Workout in the May 2017 issue of AG.)

*Capo IV, strings 1–5

Emaj7 Amaj7 C#m7 B6

let ring throughout

0 0 0 0 0 0 1 1 1 1 1 1 0 0 0 0 2 0 0 3 3 3 3 3

*Standard notation sounds at pitch; tablature numbers are relative to the capo.
On string 6, zero is four frets below the capo.



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WIKIMEDIA

There But for Fortune

Travis picking, Joan Baez-style

BY ADAM PERLMUTTER

On the 1966 Elektra album *Phil Ochs in Concert*, the folk icon can be heard introducing “There But for Fortune” as having been written for him by Joan Baez. This was in fact said in irony, as Ochs first recorded the song in 1964, but it was Baez who scored a hit with her interpretation that same year.

Baez’s recording, a single from her album *Joan Baez/5*, is a showcase not just for her soaring voice in its prime, but for her quietly formidable accompaniment chops. She plays “There But for Fortune” in the key of G, but with a capo at the third fret causing it to sound a minor third higher than written, in B♭. (To match the original recording, you’ll need to tune your guitar slightly sharp.)

Harmonically speaking, the song is straight-

forward, but with an interesting twist throughout. In the key of G, the expected IV chord is C, but beginning in bar 3, that chord is substituted with Cm/G, which is borrowed from the parallel key of G minor, giving the tonality a slightly disorienting feel. Note, too, that G and Cm/G share a bass note of G, making for a smooth transition between the chords. Keep your first finger barred at the third fret when switching between the two grips.

Speaking of smooth, Baez uses two different types of G-chord shapes here—one that third-position barre (bars 1–2, 5–6, etc.) and the other open. In measures 21–22, the open shape makes for a preferable transition between the D and Em chords, while also providing variety in the bass line through the

inclusion of the G chord’s third (B) on string 5.

In terms of the picking hand, Baez opts for a classic Travis pattern throughout. To do the same, hold each chord shape for as long as possible; pick a bass note squarely on each beat with your thumb and the melodic notes on the higher strings with your index and middle fingers, and occasionally both. (For more on Travis picking, see Jamie Stillway’s Basics lesson in the December 2017 issue of *AG* and her Weekly Workout in the January 2019 issue.)

As with any folk accompaniment, you needn’t bother with playing exactly what’s on the printed page. It would sound overly studied to play things note for note. Instead go for the overall rhythmic effect—spritely and syncopated.

AG

*Capo III

Intro

Moderately fast

Letting ring throughout

* Music sounds a minor third higher than written;
tune slightly sharp to match original recording.

Verse

5

G Cm/G

1. Show me the pris - on.

2.-4. See additional lyrics

9

G Cm/G

Show me the jail.

13

G Em

Show me the pris - on - er whose

Cont. on p. 62

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THERE BUT FOR FORTUNE

Cont. from p. 61

A **D**

17

life has gone stale. } 1.-3. And I'll

G **Em**

21

— show — you — a young man — with so —

C **Am**

25

— man - y — rea - sons — why. — But there

Bm **Em**

29

— but — for — for - tune — go



33 **A** **D**

you _____ or _____ I, _____ hmm. _____

37 **G** **Cm/G**

41 **1.-3. G** **4. G**

2. Show me the alley, show me the train
Show me the hobo who sleeps out in the rain...
3. Show me the whiskey stains on the floor
Show me the drunkard as he stumbles out the door...

4. Show me the country where bombs had to fall
Show me the ruins of buildings once so tall
And I'll show you a young land with so many reasons why
There but for fortune go you and I you and I



Ed Sullivan is flanked by (L to R) Ringo, George, John, and Paul



CBS TELEVISION

If I Needed Someone

A new Beatles arrangement for solo guitar

BY ADAM PERLMUTTER

In the mid-1960s, the 12-string electric guitar was all the rage as guitarists such as George Harrison and Roger McGuinn used the instrument to ring effect in their respective work with the Beatles and the Byrds. An excellent example of this trend is the Beatles' 1965 song "If I Needed Someone," from the album *Rubber Soul*, with its winning combo of droning 12-string guitar and three-part vocal harmonies.

On "If I Needed Someone," Harrison played the 12-string (namely, a Rickenbacker 360/12) with a capo at the seventh fret. The guitarist's electric riffs work just as nicely on the acoustic, 12- or six-string, and so they're incorporated in this solo guitar arrangement. I've chosen to maintain Harrison's capo position, which gives the arrangement a lightness, and opted also for dropped-D tuning, allowing for the root of the I chord (D7, sounds as A7) to be played on the open sixth string. If you

prefer a darker sound, feel free to shift the capo to a lower position or ditch it entirely—there's no reason you have to play the song in its original sounding key of A major.

The arrangement kicks off with a simulation of the 12-string riff, conveyed in the up-stemmed notes and propped up by a classic alternating bass pattern in octaves on strings 6 and 4. Note the nice, wide-open sound that comes from the choice of notes from within the D Mixolydian mode (D E F# G A B C) here. Try these efficient fingerings for this part: Keep your second finger stationed on string 3, fret 2, and your first on string 2, fret 1. Use your fourth finger for the third-fret notes and grab the second-fret F# with your third finger.

In the verse, the bass pattern changes to a phrase inspired by what Paul McCartney played on bass guitar on the original recording. If the hammer-ons in this bass line prove tricky to play, you can pick the notes instead; just be sure to

articulate softly, so as not to overshadow the upper notes. The melody is first stated in single notes and then in three-note block chords that mimic the original vocal parts but differ slightly in their harmonies, and this texture extends into the bridge. (Note that I've provided the vocal line for reference only, though you can of course sing along as you play.)

In learning the arrangement, it will perhaps be more useful to think vertically than horizontally. In other words, don't conceive of the music in terms of a melody with an independently moving bass line, but instead as stacks of notes on a grid. For instance, in bar 5, pinch the two notes with your thumb and index or middle finger on beat 1, pick a melody note on the *and* of 1, then pinch two notes on the *ands* of 2 and 3, etc. As with learning any solo arrangement with lots of moving parts, thinking like this can go a long way toward helping you achieve a properly rocking groove.

AC

IF I NEEDED SOMEONE

WORDS AND MUSIC BY GEORGE HARRISON

*Tuning: D A D G B E, Capo VII

Intro

Moderately

D7

let ring throughout

* Music sounds a perfect fifth higher than written.

Verse

D

5

If I need - ed some - one to love, you're the one that I'd be think - ing of, —

9

— if I need - ed some - one.

C/D D7

§ Verse

D

13

If I had some more time to spend, then I guess I'd be with you, my friend,

Cont. on p. 66

IF I NEEDED SOMEONE

Cont. from p. 65

17 **C/D** **D7**

if I need - ed some - one.

Guitar fret numbers: 0 0 2 2 0 | 0 0 2 0 0 | 0 0 2 2 0 | 0 0 2 2 0

Bridge

21 **Am7** **B7** **Em**

Had you come some oth - er day, then it might not have been like this.

Guitar fret numbers: 0 0 0 0 0 | 4 4 0 2 2 2 | 2 2 2 3 2 0 | 0 0 0 0 0 0

25 **Am7** **B7** **Em** **A7**

But you see, now, I'm too much in love.

Guitar fret numbers: 0 0 0 2 0 | 4 4 4 0 0 | 0 0 0 0 0 0 | 0 0 0 0 0 0

Verse

29 **Dmaj7**

Call your num - ber on my wall and may - be you will get a call from me,

Guitar fret numbers: 3 3 0 2 3 | 2 0 2 3 3 | 3 0 2 0 2 | 2 3 2 0 0



33 **C/D** **E/D** **C/D** **D7** **To Coda**

— if I need - ed some - one.

Interlude
D

37

C/D **D7** **D.S. al Coda**

41

Coda

45



KIM ATKINS PHOTOGRAPHY

New Beginnings

Yasmin Williams' contemplative study in open-D tuning

BY ADAM PERLMUTTER

Yasmin Williams has made a name for herself with her extended techniques, often playing the guitar flat on her lap, articulating the strings with two-handed tapping, occasionally augmented with a kalimba (thumb piano). But on "New Beginnings," from her recent album, *Unwind*, Williams uses a more conventional fingerstyle technique. "I wanted this piece to have a simple melody and accompaniment, so I used simpler techniques. I only use extended techniques if the composition calls for it."

It also happens that Williams wrote the piece five or six years ago, when she was in high school in Northern Virginia and had yet to fully develop her inventive approach to the guitar. She says, "At that point, I was starting to think about college and how my life would change, hence the title, 'New Beginnings.' I was a bit intimidated by the prospect of moving away from home for college [at NYU in New York], but also excited, which is why the piece has a rather hopeful yet subdued tone."

Williams says that the compositional process for "New Beginnings" was fairly simple. Tuning her guitar to open D, and placing a capo at the fourth fret, she sat down, started playing, and immediately happened upon the main theme (bars 1–2 of the notation here). "The other sections of the piece pretty much wrote themselves," Williams says. "I believe this particular composition took me about a week to finish, which is a lot shorter than the usual amount of time I spend composing songs."

To play "New Beginnings," first get into open-D tuning—tune strings 1 and 6 down a whole step, to D from E; string 2 down a step, to A from B; and string 3 down a half step, to F \sharp from G. The open strings will form a D chord, which will sound as F \sharp /G \flat due to the fourth-fret capo. Remember to retune as needed after clamping it on.

If open-D tuning is new to you, then the chord shapes will obviously be unfamiliar, so your first order of business is to get these

grips under your fingers. (For a full lesson on fingerpicking in open-D tuning, see the Weekly Workout in the June 2015 issue of AG.) Fingerings are often a matter of personal preference, so mark up the notation with those that work best for you. For example, you might play the first chord, Em, with your second finger on string 6, fret 2; third finger on string 4, fret 2; and first finger on string 3, fret 1. Also, be sure to hold down each chord grip for as long as possible throughout, for a ringing effect.

When learning a new piece, it might be tempting to plow right through from beginning to end, but this can be counterproductive. Instead, it's best to tackle "New Beginnings"—or really any composition for that matter—section by section, ideally with a metronome. Williams says, "Several sections repeat, which makes tackling the sections first, then connecting them, a much easier way to learn the piece."

AG

*Tuning: D A D F# A D, Capo IV

♩ = 82

Em D/F# D/G Bm7 D/A

let ring throughout

* Music sounds a major third higher than written.

1. Em D/F# D/G Bm7 D/A

2. Em D/F# Gsus2 Bm7 D/A

Bm7 A6 D/F# Gmaj7 To Coda 1

Bm7 A6 To Coda 2 1. D/F# Gmaj7

Cont. on p. 70

Cont. from p. 69

2. *D.C. al Coda 1*
(take repeats)

Coda 1

11 **D/F#** **Gmaj7** **D/A**

12 **Bm7** **A6**

13 **Bm** **A** **Gadd9** **G** **Aadd4** **Em7**

15 **Dmaj7/F#** **D/G**

17 **1.** **D/A** **Bm7** **D/A** **2.** **D/A** **Bm7** **Gadd9** **Dmaj7/A**

19 **D** **Dmaj7/F#** **Gmaj7** **D** **Dmaj7/F#** **D/A**

This musical score is for the song "The Sound of Silence" by Simon & Garfunkel. It is written for guitar and bass. The key signature is D major (two sharps: F# and C#). The score is divided into several systems, each containing a guitar staff (treble clef) and a bass staff (bass clef). Chords are indicated above the guitar staff, and guitar-specific notation like triplets and bends are present. The bass staff includes a four-line tablature system with fret numbers (0-9) and a standard bass line with note heads and stems. The score includes first and second endings, a double bar line with repeat signs, and a final section labeled "Coda 2". The tempo/mood is indicated as "rit." (ritardando) in several places. The score ends with a double bar line and the text "D.C. al Coda 2 (take repeats)".

System 1 (Measures 21-24): Chords: D, Dmaj7/F#, Gmaj7, D, Bm, A6. Includes a triplet in measure 22.

System 2 (Measures 25-28): Chords: D, Bm, A6, Em7. Includes a triplet in measure 25.

System 3 (Measures 29-32): Chords: Dmaj7/F#, Gmaj7.

System 4 (Measures 33-36): Chords: Bm, Aadd4. Includes a first ending (measures 33-34) and a second ending (measures 35-36) marked "D.C. al Coda 2 (take repeats)".

System 5 (Measures 37-40): Chords: D/F#, Gmaj7, D, A/D, D. Includes a "rit." marking in measure 37 and "Harm." (harmonic) markings in measures 39 and 40.



Streets of Laredo

A great cowboy song, played with four cowboy chords

BY ADAM PERLMUTTER

In the memorable final scene of *The Ballad of Buster Scruggs*, the latest Coen Brothers film, the actor Brendan Gleeson sings an unaccompanied version of "The Unfortunate Lad" (aka "The Unfortunate Rake"), a number that represents an excellent example of the folk process at work. The song originated in the late 1700s as an Irish ballad and spawned many variations, including an American version, "Streets of Laredo" (aka "Cowboy's Lament"), in which an unlucky cowboy meets his untimely demise in Texas.

"Streets of Laredo" has received lots of great interpretations over the years, by artists such as

Johnny Cash, Joan Baez, and Chet Atkins to name just a few. It's often played with just four chords—the I, the IV, the V, and the V/V, or II—making it ideally suited for campfire play. The arrangement shown here, not based on a particular version, is in the guitar-friendly key of C major and uses the basic C (I), G (V), F (IV), and D (II) chords. If you'd like, for a little harmonic variety, substitute G7 for the G chord—just play the first-fret F on string 1 with your first finger.

I've provided two basic accompaniment patterns, both in 3/4, or waltz time, which will

work well for the arrangement. In the first approach, pick a bass note on beat 1, followed by eighth-note (two per beat) down-up strums on beats 2 and 3. Or, try playing the chords as either finger- or flat-picked arpeggios. Remembering to hold down each chord shape for as long as possible, pick the individual chord tones in flowing eighth notes. If you're finger-picking, articulate the notes on the bottom strings with your thumb, and those on the higher strings with your index and middle fingers; if using a plectrum, use whatever pick strokes feel most natural.

AC



The Ballad of Buster Scruggs

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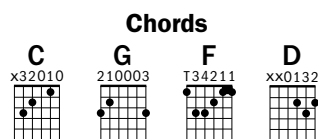


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**Basic Strum Pattern****Basic Arpeggio Pattern**

* = downstroke; V = upstroke

1. As I walked out in the streets of Laredo

C F C G
As I walked out in Laredo one day

C G C G
I spied a poor cowboy, all wrapped in white linen

C F G C
All wrapped in white linen and cold as the clay

2. I see by your outfit that you are a cowboy

C F C G
These words he did say as I slowly passed by

C G C G
Come sit down beside me and hear my sad story

C F G C
For I'm shot in the chest, and today I must die

3. Oh once in the saddle I used to go dashing

C F C G
Oh once in the saddle I used to go gay

C G C G
First down to Rosie's and then to the card house

C F G C
Got shot through the body and now here I lay

4. Oh, beat the drum slowly and play the fife lowly

C D G
And play the dead march as you carry me along

C F
Take me to the green valley, there lay the sod o'er me

C G C
For I'm a young cowboy and I know I've done wrong

5. Get six jolly cowboys to carry my coffin

C F C G
Get six pretty maidens to bear up my pall

C G C G
Put bunches of roses all over my coffin

C F G C
Roses to deaden the clods as they fall

6. Then swing your rope slowly and rattle your spurs lowly

C F C G
And give a wild whoop as you carry me along

C G C G
And in the grave throw me and roll the sod o'er me

C F G C
For I'm a young cowboy and I know I've done wrong

7. Go bring me a cup, a cup of cold water

C F C G
To cool my parched lips, the cowboy then said

C G C G
Before I returned, his spirit had departed

C F G C
And gone to the round up, the cowboy was dead

8. We beat the drum slowly and played the fife lowly

C D G
And played the dead march as we carried him along

C F
Down in the green valley, we laid the sod o'er him

C G C
He was a young cowboy and he said he'd done wrong



MAKERS & SHAKERS

COURTESY OF GEORGE GRUHN

George Gruhn of Gruhn Guitars

For nearly 50 years, the Nashville guitar dealer and author has had a finger on the guitar market

BY E.E. BRADMAN

George Gruhn is synonymous with vintage guitars. He's a magazine columnist, frequent interview subject, and author of several reference books on guitar history, including *Gruhn's Guide to Vintage Guitars: An Identification Guide for American Fretted Instruments* (now in its third edition) and *Acoustic Guitars and Other Fretted Instruments: A Photographic History*, all co-written with Walter Carter. Gruhn is best known, however, for the Nashville store he opened in 1970, a shrine for serious players and collectors around the world.

As Gruhn Guitars approaches its 50th anniversary, it's hard to name an influential guitarist who hasn't bought an instrument from the famously articulate and opinionated New York native, a Nashville resident since 1969. It's no surprise, then, that Gruhn, 73, has plenty to say about prewar instruments, speculators and

collectors, old guitars vs. new ones, the state of the vintage guitar market, and the future.

What's the main difference between the vintage and new guitar markets?

There are many differences. For one thing, there are a lot more recent-issue and utility-used guitars out there than vintage guitars. It took Martin from 1833 to 1947 to make 100,000 guitars, and they hit serial number 100,000 in 1947 and 1,000,000 in 2004. Now they're now well past 2,000,000, which means the majority of Martin guitars ever made have been made since 2004. Taylor's also way up. Gibson and Fender are way up. Fender didn't get started until 1946, but Fender makes a lot more guitars per year than Martin, and it didn't take long for Fender to make more guitars than Martin had made in their entire history.

The number of vintage guitars, however, is tiny.

The number of vintage Martins is way, way smaller, because the ones that most of the collectors are really looking for were made from about 1928 through the early '40s.

Which vintage models are most in-demand these days?

The same ones that were popular when I opened the store in January 1970. The golden era hasn't changed: '50s electrics and 1920s and '30s acoustics were the ones sought after then, and they still are. Those are the archetypes.

You've mentioned that some instruments took a while to get known.

The F-5 mandolin, for example, was introduced in 1922 in an effort to kick-start mandolin sales after the mandolin orchestra boom began

dying. The F-5 was a miserable commercial failure; Gibson lost a lot of money, but later, folks like Bill Monroe discovered that you could play bluegrass on them. The F-5 was too early, by 20 years, to benefit from bluegrass, which didn't exist as a musical form until about August of '45—too early for bluegrass and too late for the mandolin orchestra boom.

A lot of these instruments were made for purposes that are not popular today, and what we do play on them was not music envisioned by the designers. Even when Stradivari and Guarneri were making violins, they didn't imagine players like Paganini, or later, Jascha Heifetz or Itzhak Perlman. In fact, the kind of violins Stradivari and Guarneri made have all been hot-rodged to play modern music.

You haven't noticed any new trends as certain models fall in or out of favor?

Are there new trends, for example, in bluegrass guitars? Not really. Bluegrass players want guitars that are either Martin dreadnoughts or copies of Martin dreadnoughts. They're looking at a Collings dreadnought, a Santa Cruz dreadnought, a Huss & Dalton dreadnought, or a Pre-War model. These players are looking for something like a Preston Thompson, a copy of an old Martin, not necessarily an innovative new design. The guitars that are selling for bluegrass music are the ones that most closely resemble a 1937 D-28 or a D-18.

What is new is that companies are now able to gear up and make more guitars than ever. CNC machinery permits more guitars to be made with reasonably high standards of quality. Even in the 1960s, Harmony and Kay both sold a lot more guitars than Martin and Gibson, but today, you see a lot more used Martins in good condition than you see old Harmonys. With proper care, a good guitar can last for a couple hundred years, but we see more used Martins on the market and in players' hands than we do 1960s Harmonys.

What made the difference?

CNC machines. When you went to a music store in the mid-'60s and looked at new Martins, they played OK, and new Gibsons played fine. But new Harmony and Kay guitars often had necks that were warped, or neck angles that were bad before they even left the store. The dovetail joints were not very precision-fitted, and the adjustable truss rods didn't work. With a CNC machine, you can program it, but when you're doing it by hand, some things are harder.

Before the introduction of CNC equipment, Harmony and Kay guitars didn't work well, which is why you don't see nearly as many used

Harmonys available or being played, even by students—most have been thrown away.

Some might assume that instruments from the '60s and '70s, which are now considered vintage, are in some way superior to what's being made today.

When I was starting out, the quality of many new guitars, especially Gibson acoustics, was horrible. You have to go back to the mid-'60s for Gibson acoustics to be good. The late-'60s Gibsons had very narrow necks that were uncomfortable, and '70s Gibson guitars, with double-X bracing, had terrible neck-set angles and extremely low bridges. They were garbage. Vintage guitars cost no more—and sometimes, less—than buying a new one, and they were better. One reason Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young used old instruments was that they sounded good, and back then, the new ones did not.

But guitar repair has certainly gotten better, right?

Far better. Back in the '60s, there were hardly any people trained to do good repair. It was a lost art; even Martin and Gibson did lousy repair work. Now there's lots of people doing good repairs.

'You now can get a new guitar for much less money than a vintage one, and it can be really good!'

Are some new instruments better than the old ones?

A Paul Beard dobro is in many ways built better than the old Dobros. The Beards are not plywood like the old ones were; the tolerances are better, his metal components are better, and he makes his own coverplate and tailpiece, spider bridge, resonator—the whole thing. All that metal work and woodwork, he does it. The only thing he buys are the tuners, and if you get a pickup, he doesn't make the pickup—though he did co-design it with Jerry Douglas and Fishman. A new Beard guitar is louder, and to most peoples' ears, it has a better tone than a pre-World War II Dobro. Brand-new resonator guitars are every bit as good as the old ones, or better.

Tell me about your customers. Are they mostly young, or old?

There's been a huge demographic shift. I have very few customers my age who are actively adding to their collections. For one thing, a lot of the younger folks are playing, but not all. Clearly, many of them listen to music that is

composed on a computer rather than a guitar, and people listening to rap and hip-hop are not likely to become great guitar players. But there are indeed a lot of people playing guitar. It is by no means a dead instrument. Most of the younger players, however, don't have the income to buy vintage guitars.

How would you describe the folks who come into your shop?

There are essentially three different types of buyers: utility-tool users, true collectors, and speculators. They're all very different than each other, and I can usually tell in the first two minutes what type of buyer a customer is. Sometimes I don't even have to listen to them—I just watch how they look at a guitar and how they pick one up, and I'll know already which category they're in.

A musician/utility-tool user frequently picks up a guitar and doesn't even look at it; they immediately put it in playing position and start to play, half the time with their eyes closed. The utility users rarely pay over \$5,000 for anything. Occasionally they'll go up to \$10,000 but usually not beyond, and they have to be pretty serious to go beyond \$5,000. Collectors can go higher, but they are limited by how much income they have. Most collectors are not millionaires.

When did you begin collecting instruments?

When I was still in college. They were affordable enough that I could do that. Frankly, in my generation, most of us couldn't have afforded to be collectors if the prices got as high as they have. Speculators didn't bid the prices beyond the reach of most musicians—and even collectors—until the late 1980s, when they started getting high enough that a lot of people could no longer afford to collect.

What made that happen?

Speculators, as well as some collectors, have driven prices way beyond what they were when most of my generation was actively collecting. Most of the guys who play vintage guitars in bands today, if they're my age or even in their 50s or 60s, bought them before they cost so much. Prices got driven up in a rapid spiral—some things went tenfold—between 2000 and 2007, thanks to speculators; collectors don't want prices to go up so fast, because soon they can't even afford instruments anymore. Last week, I sold a sunburst Les Paul for \$275,000, and I didn't pay quite that much for my house, with nine acres.

Wow.

Some of these things have gotten ridiculous, and that market is delicately poised. It's a

small enough market that if there's nobody younger stepping up to do it, it could collapse. Prices of Lloyd Loar-signed F-5 mandolins made from 1922 through 1924 peaked in early '07 and have not recovered; I have six of them for sale right now with no takers. The people who were paying a good price to buy and use them pretty much dropped out by the time prices hit \$50,000. They were done. So, it went from \$50,000 right on up to about \$175,000–\$185,000, but it was driven by speculators.

And what do you think of collectors?

Collectors will pay more than a utility-tool user, and when collectors bid them up beyond what utility-tool users are willing to pay, utility-tool users say, "Those hateful collectors are now outbidding me . . . I can no longer afford to have a prewar D-45 or a herringbone D-28." Well, they only made 91 pre-war D-45s, and when you look at the way some guys treated them, they didn't deserve to own them. If it hadn't been for collectors, there'd be no Stradivari or Guarneri violins left today. Collectors take care of stuff, and with proper care, instruments can last multiple human generations. If they're used only by utility-tool users who have no respect for originality, instruments won't last even one generation.

How does the aging Baby Boomer population affect the vintage guitar market?

Baby Boomers, who have driven the vintage instrument market, are not going to be in the driver's seat anymore. They still have a lot of instruments, but they're not buying much. They bought at two periods in their lives: from puberty to age 25 and then again when they had a midlife crisis. If they went out and bought 50 guitars when they hit age 40, they still have them, and those guitars aren't worn out; a good one could probably last a couple hundred years, at least.

And what about their guitar collections?

A lot of instruments will enter the market because Baby Boomer collectors are downsizing or dying. I'm already getting lots of calls from family members of collectors who now have Alzheimer's and don't play anymore, estate executors for people who've died, and collectors who want to downsize because they have arthritis, can't play anymore, and are thinking of moving into a retirement community. So that puts downward pressure on that market, at least for a while. These instruments are the true archetypes. They're genuinely rare, and they're already bringing in more money than they did three years ago.

So, these instruments are not entering the market at a bargain price.

Well, in many cases, they're less money than they were ten years ago, but I do not expect that they're going to go down from here. Are prices likely to go dramatically lower for things like a good herringbone D-28, a good pre-WWII 000-28, or a Gibson Advanced Jumbo? No.

Do you think younger players and collectors will step up?

I could be hopeful that Generation X and Millennials will have more money later, and may get into collecting more, but most of them can't afford to be collectors.

Are there great new instruments for working musicians, utility-tool users, who can't afford a vintage instrument?

If you can't afford \$50,000–\$60,000 for a golden-era D-28 or \$100,000 for a '37 that's squeaky clean—which is down a bit from what they were ten years ago, when they were going for \$125,000–\$150,000—you can buy a guitar for under \$5,000 that is really good. The quality of new acoustics today is quite good, and it's true for banjos and mandolins, too. For \$2,400, you can buy a D-18 Standard, which has a comfortable neck, a truss rod that works, and forward-shifted and scalloped bracing. They're good—better than a 1970 or most of the ones made through the '60s—and they cost less. The really great vintage ones, of that 1930s era, are the ones that beat them. You can even buy a guitar for under \$500 that's also good enough to take onstage and use professionally, like a Seagull, made in Canada, which is way better than the Harmonys and Kays used to be—and adjusted for inflation, cheaper!

What about Martins?

My Martin Custom D-18 and 0000-18 Sinker mahogany guitars are some of the best guitars made in my lifetime. They're not better than what Martin made in the mid-'30s, but when you consider that they're brand new, not even broken in yet, and they rival or beat most anything made in the past 70 years, they're definitely good enough to take onstage. Vince Gill is even playing some of my Sinker mahogany Martins onstage with the Eagles; they're some of his primary road guitars.

Do you think they'll be collectible in the future?

That depends on what's being made new in the future. Right now, there are plenty of vintage instruments that are actually selling for less money than it would cost to make a replica. How collectible is something if you can get the vintage original, like the 100-year-old F-4 mandolin, in good condition for \$5,000–\$6,000? You couldn't build a replica of it for that.

Will a great instrument that's new today have the magic after a few decades of being played?

Those new Sinker mahogany guitars are pretty magical. Unlike the early '70s, when you absolutely had to buy an old guitar if you wanted something good, you now can get a new guitar for much less money than a vintage one, and it can be really good. But it's delusional to think that the new ones are better than the old ones. Some of the new ones come astonishingly close, but a 1937 D-28 or D-45 has not been beaten yet. The same is true of fine electric guitars such as pre-CBS Fenders and 1950s–1960s Gibson electric guitars.

AG



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Acoustic
CONNECTIONS

Is It Safe to Hang My Guitar on the Wall?

Keeping your guitar close at hand—on the wall

BY MAMIE MINCH

Q: I have a vintage steel-bodied resonator guitar and I'd like to display it. Would hanging it on the wall alter the setup or damage it in any way? If so, are there any other types of stands you feel are safer to use for display purposes?
—Danial McCourt

A: Thanks for writing in—this is such a common question! It sounds like you, along with many of my clients, would like your favorite guitar to be on display at home. I support this idea, for a couple of reasons. First, you get to show off your handsome resonator guitar! I'm with you. I still think nothing looks cooler than vintage Nationals: The stylish lines, the great finishes, with worn-in patinas—they're good-looking hunks of metal. I keep mine on the wall in my living room and I love seeing it there.

The second reason it's great to have a guitar hanging around is that it's in your sightline. You'll be way more likely to pick it up and do that thing that we're all here to talk about—play it! As a creative person with a day job, I struggle with finding time and motivation to make space for writing and playing. This is a sort of life hack: if all you have to do is reach up and grab your guitar, you're more likely to actually play it.

Of course, I need to play the role of the conservative luthier a little and say: the absolute safest place for your guitar is in the case,



BROOKLYN/UNSPASH

stored in a stable environment. It won't suffer any unexpected bumps or bruises if it's safely tucked away. If you are going to have it out, a floor stand would be my least favorite choice; you can't predict when a dog's tail, an absent-minded guest, or even (gasp!) *you* might knock it over. This often means a headstock break, but punctures and dings are also common injuries. Getting it up on the wall, in a padded hanger, is the better option; it's simply more out of the way.

Part of your question is purely mechanical—will the guitar suffer at all from hanging by its headstock? The answer is no. It's generally accepted as a safe way to hang a guitar because the downward exertion from the weight of the guitar isn't nearly as strong as the pull of the strings in the opposite direction. Be sure to check that the tuning machines won't be damaged by the hanger, and see that it is coated or covered in some inert, soft material that won't damage your guitar's finish.

The last thing we want to think about, of course, is humidity. (Yes, even with a metal-bodied guitar.) In a perfect world, our homes would be 70 degrees and 50 percent humidity, but that's a struggle for most of us to maintain, as temperatures and relative humidity fluctuate throughout weather changes. So, get an inexpensive hygrometer and have a look at how your home measures up. You may need to run a humidifier in the room with your guitar during the winter when the heat is on. And of course, keep an eye on the humidity and temperature. If, despite your best efforts, you keep getting humidity-related problems, like cracks, maybe this isn't the right guitar to keep out.

All that said, I still feel that a guitar that's been played and paid attention to is one that's doing its job, even if that means it gets a little dusty now and again.

Mamie Minch is the co-owner of Brooklyn Lutherie and an active blues performer. brooklynlutherie.com



Mamie Minch

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NEW GEAR



Farida
OT-65
Wide VBS



Farida
OT-25
NA



Farida Old Town Series OT-65 Wide VBS and OT-25 NA

A slope-shouldered classic and an underappreciated shape revived for the modern age

BY BILL LEIGH

Chinese guitar maker Farida has been crafting instruments for four decades. Though the brand is fairly well established in Europe and Asia, Farida is a relative newcomer to the USA. Yet, the U.S. guitar-building tradition sits at the center of the company's aesthetic. The mission of Farida's Old Town series is to marry classic American designs with modern building techniques and playability. The company's latest offerings are contemporary takes on a couple of wartime Gibson models. The OT-65 Wide VBS is clearly inspired by the popular Gibson J-45, a round-shouldered dreadnought that debuted in 1942. The more petite 00-size OT-25 NA takes after the lesser-known Gibson LG-3, which was also introduced that same year.

DRIVING 65

With its soft shoulders and wide lower bout, the OT-65's profile mirrors the sensuous curves of a classic guitar. The more svelte upper bout meant the Farida felt comfortable on my lap, not at all bulky. The instrument's solid Sitka spruce top features a warm, dark sunburst finish punctuated by tasteful ivoroid binding with a matching striped rosette. The solid mahogany back and sides have strikingly pronounced grain lines in handsome, dark caramel tones. The odd shape of the striped tortoiseshell pickguard exaggerates the guitar's distinctive body contours. Though it adds to the body's vintage vibe, it's actually a departure from the classic teardrop shape.

The neck has a comfortably flat C shape, a modern touch that differs from the

baseball-bat neck contour of many vintage guitars. The neck is made of nato and topped with a handsome pau ferro fingerboard with acrylic fret markers. The "Wide" designation refers to the neck's ample 1-3/4-inch nut width, which provides generous string spacing for fingerstyle playing. For those who prefer less spaciousness, a narrower neck is an available option. The slim headstock has Farida's classic-looking script logo with three-on-a-plate tuners.

Dreadnought guitars were named after powerful battleships, and with its warm, strong sound, the OT-65 certainly maintains the tradition. The guitar's deep lows lend sonic gravitas while never overpowering an overall balanced sound. The Wide string-spacing makes the OT-65 a fingerstyle dream, while keeping things comfortable on the fretting hand. Plucked notes rang with warmth, clarity, and projection, and flatpicked single-notes cut through with ample treble bite. Strummed chords were warm, fat, and room filling. With a full 25-1/2-inch scale length and powerful bottom-end, tuning down to open D was a satisfying place to be on the OT-65.

PETITE PACKAGE

The 00-sized Farida OT-25 NA takes its inspiration from a "Banner" era guitar, but it has many of the same appointments and options as its bigger brother, the OT-65. "NA" is for the Sitka spruce top's natural finish, but the instrument is also available with the vintage sunburst "VBS" finish. Our tester had a 1-11/16-inch nut for narrower string-spacing, but it can also come with a more fingerstyle-friendly 1-3/4-inch nut and the Wide designation. The shorter body and neck accommodate a scale length of 24.7 inches.

Like its primary inspiration, the OT-25 has a natural spruce top, spruce X-bracing, and the gently curving shoulders that are an important part of the aesthetic. The grain of the mahogany sides and back shows through the gloss finish, and tasteful binding connects the major body pieces. Like the OT-65, the OT-25 has three-on-a-plate open-back tuners with ivoroid buttons. The headstock's script logo nods to the wartime era vibe coming from these two guitars.

Despite its shorter scale, the nato neck didn't feel particularly cramped, and notes sounded balanced across the pau ferro fingerboard. Set up with comfortably low action, the OT-25 was easy on my fretting hand, and not bad for fingerstyle, though the Wider string-spacing option would be a better choice for frequent fingerpickers. Strummed, the OT-25 sounded full and tonally even, though without

the extended lows and exceptionally sparkly top end of the OT-65. Volume was neither modest nor mammoth, but the OT-25's moderate muscle could hold its own during a two-guitar strumming session.

The OT-25 is a solid acoustic with great playability, and it's nice to see a guitar builder draw inspiration from a lesser-known vintage instrument. However, the more distinctive voice of the larger OT-65 makes it stand out among vintage-inspired acoustics. **AC**

FARIDA OT-65 WIDE VBS

BODY Round-shouldered dreadnought with 16-1/8"-wide lower bout, 4-3/16" depth; solid Sitka spruce top with X-bracing; solid mahogany back and sides; ivoroid ABS plastic binding and rosette; tortoiseshell pickguard; gloss sunburst finish

NECK 25-1/2"-scale, 14-fret set nato neck; 1-3/4"-wide nut; pau ferro fingerboard with acrylic dot markers; vintage-style three-on-a-plate tuners with ivory buttons

OTHER Bone nut and compensated saddle; pau ferro bridge; D'Addario EJ-16 (.012–.053) phosphor bronze strings

MADE IN China

PRICE \$774 (street)

FARIDA OT-25 NA

BODY 00-sized prewar shape, 14.25"-wide lower bout, 4.25" depth; solid Sitka spruce top with X-bracing; solid mahogany back and sides; ivoroid ABS binding and rosette; tortoiseshell pickguard; gloss natural finish

NECK 24.7"-scale 14-fret set nato neck with adjustable truss rod; 1-11/16"-wide nut (also available with 1-3/4" width); pau ferro fingerboard with acrylic dot markers; vintage-style three-on-a-plate tuners with ivory buttons

OTHER Bone nut and compensated saddle; pau ferro bridge; D'Addario EJ-16 (.012–.053) phosphor bronze strings; also available in a sunburst finish

MADE IN China

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NEW GEAR



The Acoustasonic is packed with firsts from Fender, including this recessed neck plate.



The sculpted soundhole, which is much like the *tornavoz* seen in some Torres guitars, projects acoustic tone like a speaker horn. Dropped picks can be fished out by opening the rear control cavities instead of trying to shake them out.



The Acoustasonic has three controls: a dedicated volume, a "mod" knob in place of the customary tone, and a five-position switch.





Fender American Acoustasonic Telecaster

A new guitar that ups the game for acoustic-electric hybrids

BY GREG OLWELL

By now, you've probably seen the new Fender Acoustasonic Telecaster splashed across pages of websites and guitar magazines such as this one. It's an instrument that provokes some people, while inspiring curiosity in others. The questions seem to mount as you scratch the surface. I initially wondered about the Acoustasonic's function and necessity, but as I spent time with the guitar, my bewilderment turned to sureness that Fender has developed something that's not just new or innovative for the sake of it, but useful for any guitarist in search of a range of acoustic and electric tones in a highly playable instrument.

Of course, the Acoustasonic is not for everyone. No guitar is. Though nearly the same size as a standard solidbody Telecaster—and seemingly similar to Taylor's T5 series electric-acoustic hollowbody hybrids—in both form and function the Acoustasonic is an acoustic guitar with an advanced electronics package that integrates convincing acoustic and electric tones into a familiar silhouette. The shape will be a roadblock for some acoustic guitarists, but the Acoustasonic—which is a name pinched from one of Fender's acoustic amp series—has numerous important differences that make it more appealing than similar-looking guitars that Fender has offered.

Pick a note and the top—heck the entire guitar—vibrates much like you'd want from any acoustic, though its natural acoustic output is predictably modest. The body is routed from a single slab of mahogany that's much more than chambered—it's hollowed except for a few mounting points for electronics and a lip around the circumference that holds the Lutz spruce top. The Acoustasonic's solid top is braced and responds acoustically to your picking attack. For a more acoustic feel and vibe, the guitar comes with a mahogany neck, lightly finished so the sensation is more like touching wood than polyurethane. Still, Fender's classic playability is there and should make this instrument appeal to more than just guitarists weaned on electrics. I'd wager that the Acoustasonic's ease of use and comfort would appeal to guitarists with small hands, or older players who might find a full-size acoustic body more challenging to use. But even with all of these acoustic touches, you won't likely see one of these guitars at a

bluegrass festival or old-time picking session any time soon.

This Acoustasonic's soul is found in a network of three pickup systems—a Fishman undersaddle transducer, Fishman Acoustasonic Enhancer, and Fender Acoustasonic Noiseless magnetic pickup—and a processor they call the Acoustic Engine. The output jack delivers acoustic and electric sounds to an amp (acoustic, electric, or both if used with an A/B switch), recording interface, or PA system. Fender co-designed the Acoustic Engine with Fishman, and it uses technology similar to Fishman's Aura audio imaging. It's manipulated by three controls: a dedicated volume, a “mod” knob in place of the customary tone, and a five-position switch.

The switch selects between “voice pairs,” which are located at the extremes of the mod knob's range and can be blended to your ear's delight. By twisting the mod knob at each switch setting, you can select sounds including a Sitka/rosewood dreadnought or alpine spruce/rosewood auditorium (position 5), Engelmann spruce/maple parlor or Sitka/mahogany dreadnought (position 4), Sitka/Brazilian dread or the Sitka/Brazilian sound blended with a body pickup (position 3), Sitka/mahogany dread or Sitka/mahogany dread blended with electric pickup (position 2), and electric clean and electric “fat” (position 1). All of the flattop acoustic sounds delivered convincingly acoustic tones to the PAs and acoustic and electric amps I played through.

Shifting my thinking to what sounded best for the music led me to have more fun playing the Acoustasonic than the other way around. Your results may vary, but I kept returning to the mahogany dread sound, which was especially sweet and robust, with a heady dynamic richness. (Fender must agree, because it's the one sound that appears twice in the voice pairs.) Low-end runs on the Brazilian dread setting had the kind of cavernous bottom end that you'd hope for, while the parlor setting's upper-mids and highs gave it a more intimate feel.

Even with all of the good sounds available from the high-tech electronics, the entire Acoustasonic package is united by the guitar's genuine acoustic attributes, which gave the playing experience an authentic feel missing from other similar instruments. On the electric side of things, the standard Tele sound was

excellent, and the voice pair with the dreadnought sound became another go-to. The solo Tele pickup with the fat sound was the only one that felt processed, so I kept it at the clean setting and instead used an overdrive pedal for heft.

The player who ends up favoring the Fender Acoustasonic Telecaster is anybody's guess, but it's likely to be a musician who places a priority on functional, accessible tools. It's certainly going to find an audience among those who need acoustic and electric tones at the ready and value the Acoustasonic's looks and high level of comfort. The guitar's plug-and-play functionality made it great for harnessing the creative spark in the home studio, and having one instrument that can do a whole host of sounds on a gig, whether in the club or at church, is an appealing proposition. **AC**

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Body Mahogany body, modified Telecaster shape; Lutz spruce top with transverse bracing and “Stringed Instrument Response” resonator; b-w-b top binding and rosette; satin urethane finish

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Santa Cruz Parabolic Tension Strings

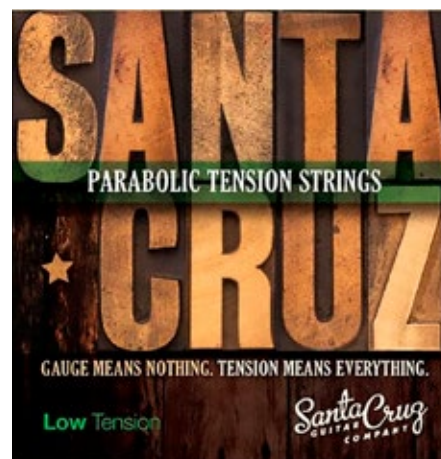
Uniquely conceived strings are finding an audience with finicky players

BY SEAN MCGOWAN

When it comes to strings, guitarists seem to fall into one of two categories: some obsess about gauges and materials, while others tend to put on whatever is laying around or happens to be on sale at the local guitar store. Admittedly, I tend to fall into the former category, continually on the lookout for the perfect string (placing a close second to the search for the perfect pick). After all, aside from the pick and your fingers, strings are the most immediate transducer of your sound. Changing string types or brands can have a significant effect on the sound and balance of your guitar—not unlike experimenting with different reeds in a woodwind instrument.

To address frustrations with commercial strings' inability to capture the inherent harmonic complexity and balance of an acoustic instrument, Richard Hoover and the Santa Cruz Guitar Company consulted with acoustician and inventor Roger Siminoff. Together, they created Parabolic Tension strings as a way to achieve an optimal relative volume between strings by using specific core-to-wrap ratios to control the overall string tension. They are made of round steel cores, wound with phosphor bronze, and a proprietary micro-coating. Santa Cruz offers these strings in Low and Mid Tension sets (\$18) and also offers an innovative direct subscription program.

I tried a Low Tension set on my 1992



Nickerson FC3, a 25-1/4-inch scale, 16-inch wide guitar. The strings felt very natural, not oily like some coated strings. I was expecting the strings to be loud. Instead, the tone was clear and sweet, whether I played fingerstyle gently or more aggressively with a pick. When I changed positions and played across the strings, it was immediately apparent how the notes sounded balanced and true, like a well-tuned piano. These are strings definitely worth obsessing over. santacruzguitar.com



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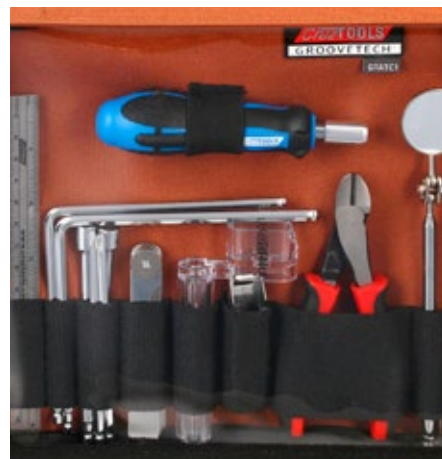
BY GREG OLWELL

Outside of a few of the points of instrument care that this magazine drives home regularly—proper humidification!—your acoustic guitar is an instrument that's built to last and usually needs little attention to be playable and healthy. Still, guitars can use a little care from time to time. For the segment of the guitar-playing community that likes to futz with its instruments, the GrooveTech Acoustic Guitar Tech Kit (\$59.95 street) covers the essentials. While not necessarily a comprehensive collection for the aspiring professional luthier, the kit offers a well-appointed assortment of quality tools and information for even barely handy guitarists to do their own basic maintenance, such as a cutter and winder for string changes; a ruler, feeler

gauges, capo, and wrenches for truss-rod adjustments and checking string height; and a flexible, telescopic mirror for peering inside the box to look for issues at the bridge or loose braces.

The zippered case is sized to fit in the accessory compartment of most gig bags and has a small storage pocket and a printed setup guide to march you through the concepts and execution. (Measurements such as string height are offered throughout the guide, but be aware that what works best for you and your playing style might differ from the suggested specs.)

While the GrooveTech Acoustic Guitar Tech Kit won't be essential for every guitarist—loads of us just aren't interested or know our limits and leave the work to the pros—it's a nice and



useful kit that covers the items that most guitarists would need for basic maintenance and keeps them in a handsome package at a reasonable price. groovetechtools.com

Tech Kit Contents

Ruler (obverse, inches to 64ths and mm; reverse, setup specs), Bit driver, Bits: 4mm and 5mm soundhole truss rod; 1/4" and 5/16" truss rod drivers; #1 and #2 Phillips, Thickness gauges, String cutter, String winder, Capo, Telescopic mirror

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Singer/activist Paul Robeson leads Oakland, CA, shipyard workers in song, Sept.1942



Power of the People!

Impressive box set celebrates songs of justice, reverence, celebration, and more

BY PAT MORAN

Sung, declaimed, and chanted in over 20 languages ranging from Arabic to Xhosa, drawn across the planet from Algeria to Vietnam, Smithsonian Folkways' *The Social Power of Music* is a benchmark for folk compilations to come. Co-producer and compiler Jeff Place embraces the lively sprawl of music for and by "the people" by emphasizing the social aspect of song. Comprising more than 80 tunes spread over four discs, the collection highlights soundtracks for social justice, hymns of praise and reverence, celebratory songs, and anthems that propel global change. Acoustic guitars, frequently inexpensive and readily available to common folk, are prominent in each category.

Disc One, "Songs of Struggle," juxtaposes the loping strum and cross-current picking of staples like Woody Guthrie's "This Land Is Your Land" and the New World Singers' "Blowing in the Wind" with Kristen Lems' coiling and darting guitar on "Ballad of the ERA" and Andrés Jiménez's plangent swipes and stinging accents on "El pobre sigue sufriendo (The Poor Keep on Suffering)." The sequencing of traditional favorites alongside less familiar tunes

emphasizes the timeless yet up-to-the-minute relevance of artists like Guthrie, while also broadening the definition of folk.

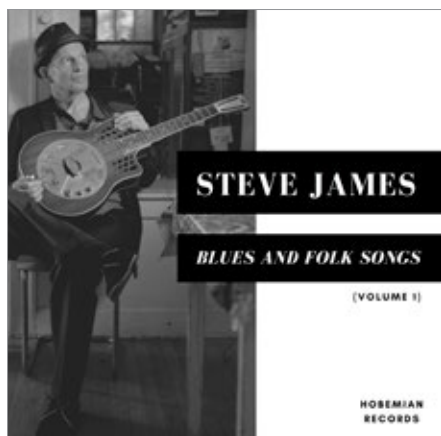
"Sacred Sounds," the focus of Disc Two, traditionally draw their power from the unadorned human voice, yet even here, guitars shine. The Strange Creek Singers' "Will the Circle Be Unbroken" features tumbling bent-note fills and rippling picking. On "Dayeinu," a Passover Seder celebration of God's beneficence, Raasche and Alan Mills thread jaunty vocals through plucked and traipsing rhythms.

Disc Three throws a party with "Social Songs and Gatherings." Here, guitars rattle like washboard percussion on the Golden Gate Gypsy Orchestra's "Oylupnuv Obrutch (the Broken Hoop Song)," canter to and fro on Lorenzo Martinez's "La entrega de los novios (Delivery of the Newlyweds)," or sidewind through carousel fiddle on Austin Pitre's Cajun rave-up "Jolie blonde."

The marches and clarion calls on Disc Four's "Global Movements" rely most heavily on the guitars' propulsive rhythms and ebullient melodies. Massed acoustics propel the Gypsy-jazz-flavored march "Bella ciao (Goodbye Dear)," an

Italian anti-fascist call to action that has acquired increasing urgency amid the world's increasing slide towards authoritarianism. The balalaika-ish sound of chattering guitar drives Suni Paz's "Prisioneros somos (We Are All Prisoners)," a call for solidarity across Central America to defy oppression and corruption. Raquel Chaves' pulsing strummed guitar underpins "Funeral do lavrador (Funeral of a Worker)," where Zelia Barbosa and her band harness the seductive rhythms of Brazilian bossa nova to a message of hope and defiance.

Despite this collection's impressive reach, it cannot be truly considered comprehensive. Instead the compilers have captured a polyglot and polyrhythmic genre in flux. By embracing such an open and fluid definition of folk, Smithsonian Folkways emphasizes the social aspect of this music, not just its message of social justice, but also the means by which it's produced—through celebrations, gatherings, worship, and political movements. *The Social Power of Music* is a vivid snapshot of an international brother- and sisterhood unified by the insistent rhythms and melodies of song. **AC**



Steve James
Blues and Folk Songs, Vol. 1
 (Hobemian Records)

An engaging primer on solo acoustic blues

I first heard Steve James 25 years ago on his critically acclaimed *Two Track Mind* album on the regional Antone's records label. James now records for an indie label, but he's retained his formidable command of blues played on flattop and resonator guitars.

This collection of blues, rags, and ballads finds James marking his recent move from Austin, Texas, to the Pacific Northwest with an original blues in open-D titled "Seattle Blues." The rest of the album is devoted mostly to historic blues and folk-blues numbers from such well-known artists as Big Bill Broonzy ("Snake Doctor: How Do You Want It Done?") and Uncle Dave Macon (represented by 1937's "All In Down and Out Blues"). But James also digs deeply into more obscure players, like Texas bluesman Henry Thomas, who played guitar and rack-mounted pipes (a cover of 1928's "Bulldoze Blues"); and Crockett, Texas, bluesman Frank Robinson ("Lucy Mae"). James adds some acrobatic thumb rolls to his cover of Jesse Colin Young's '60s coffeehouse favorite "Sugar Babe," and closes with Johnny Winter's snarling "Mean Town Blues."

Over the years, James interviewed some of the artists covered on this recording, and he brings insight and authenticity to these renditions. The result is an engaging primer on solo acoustic blues. (Note: transcripts to several of these songs can be found at store.acousticguitar.com in James' instructional book *Roots and Blues Fingerstyle Guitar Explorations*, and you'll find the music and tips for playing "Copeland's Fancy" on page 94.)

—Greg Cahill

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Scott Tennant

The Segovia Sessions

(GuitarCoop)

Spotlight on Segovia as composer

Andrés Segovia (1893–1987) was more than just an unparalleled virtuoso player; he also commissioned or introduced so many gems that have remained cornerstones of the classical guitar repertoire. The Spanish master is much less-known as a composer himself, though he appears to have written around 60 pieces, seemingly for his own amusement or dedicated to friends, most of them quite short.

This album, by Los Angeles Guitar Quartet co-founder Scott Tennant (who participated in master classes with the maestro at USC in 1981 and 1986), presents 36 of Segovia's works, including seven of his brief but surprisingly satisfying *Preludios* (four are under a minute, the longest is 1:30), four of his charming *Easy Lessons*, ten of his 23 *Canciones Populares de Destinos Piases* (concise miniatures that wonderfully evoke folk music themes of France, Ireland, Poland, Serbia, his native Catalonia, and more), and the real (literal) “find” of the album—the premiere recording of a “lost” piece, likely written in the 1940s, called *Fandango de la Madrugada*. At five-and-a-half minutes, it is by far the most ambitious work in the collection—brimming with rich Spanish flavors, perhaps a bit more flamenco in character than we usually associate with Segovia, but also with some lovely lyrical passages.

Tennant recorded the album using a wonderfully warm-sounding 1969 Ramirez guitar (made by luthier Antonio Martinez) that Segovia played often from 1969 and 1980, and his playing brilliantly captures the Iberian spirit of Segovia's musings.

—Blair Jackson



Rhythm Future Quartet

Rhythm Future Quartet and Friends

(Magic Fiddle Music)

Finesse and frivolity in equal measure

Credit the Rhythm Future Quartet with effectively retracing and building on a vintage style that combines distinctly Django-esque Gypsy-jazz motifs with strains contributed by a varied group of guest artists. While the music on this, the group's enticing third album, makes occasional detours—guest vocalist Cyrille Aimée's sweet serenade on the lilting “Solitude,” and the deft picking and skittish violin employed in “Olli's Bossa” providing the two most obvious examples—the majority of these 13 tracks hold to a generally jazzy delivery.

The core combo sustains that spirited approach via Greg Loughman's pronounced bass lines and the solid foundation served up by the quartet as a whole, but it's the nimble picking of guitarists Olli Soikkeli and Max O'Rourke (and, on the track “Sleepless,” special guest Stochelo Rosenberg), in tandem with the assured strokes of violinist Jason Anick, that establishes the tone and tempo. More often than not, it's the fretwork and strings that provide dueling dynamics. And it's the combination of strut and sway that make the music so distinctive, whether it is the jaunty pacing of “Minor Blues,” the spunky rhythms of “Tricotism,” or the more stoic sensibilities of “Treetops” and “Jazz Crimes.”

Thanks to the plucking and picking of the guitars, as well as Anick's vibrant violin, the majority of these arrangements come across as both intricate and spontaneous. With finesse and frivolity served up in equal measure, consider this effort a genuine feast of friends.

—Lee Zimmerman



The Honey Dewdrops

Anyone Can See

(thehoneydewdrops.com)

Folk duo mixes activism with downhome charm

On the track “Welcome to the Club,” Kagey Parrish's and Laura Wortman's duelling Huss & Dalton guitars enfold and pull apart while Parrish drawls, “Get your ass to the yoga class and do some downward dogs.” The wry rumination on the gentrification of the Honey Dewdrops' Baltimore neighborhood illustrates the theme of *Anyone Can See*: Life is change and challenge. On their fifth independent release, the husband-and-wife acoustic folk duo embraces both, welcoming the unexpected and unplanned by playing with a flexibility that mirrors their live performances.

Spontaneity informs “For One More.” Here, Wortman's slinking Gibson LG-1 stretches like a cat while Parrish's elastic leads race like whitecaps over water. Parrish and Wortman's free and easy interplay bolsters the tune's take on immigration, which stresses inclusion over walls.

The collection's mood darkens on “Going Rate”—as the duo sings about the protests that rocked their community in 2015 after a young African American man died in police custody; Parrish's stinging Collings mandolin mimics emergency sirens.

The Dewdrops' activism is tempered by their warm playing. “Rainy Windows” evokes sensuous melancholy with cyclical picking and pulsing cross-rhythms. The filigree fingerstyle of “Easy” and the loping bent-note fills on the Hank Williams cover “Ramblin' Man” mark the duo's embrace of their folk roots.

With *Anyone Can See*, the Honey Dewdrops show that you can be downhome and in the thick of it at the same time, as long as you're flexible and go with the flow.

—PM



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Steve James

Copeland's Fancy

A spirited guitar original
with deep country-blues roots

BY STEVE JAMES

In 1975, when you dialed directory assistance for Beckley, West Virginia, an operator there would actually answer the phone:

"May I help you?"

"Yes, thanks. Do you have a listing for Leonard Copeland?"

(Pause) "No, but I have two L. Copelands."

"May I have both, please?"

I chose one of the numbers and made the call. And Leonard Copeland answered the phone. It's hard to say who was more surprised—I, to be talking to the man whose 1929 recordings with Roy Harvey represent the definitive country fingerstyle guitar duet; or he, because somebody still cared. We spoke about me coming up from Tennessee for a visit, but his health wasn't good, and neither was my car, so it never happened.

The sound of Copeland's guitar, however, has remained iconic in the years since, and my piece "Copeland's Fancy" reflects that. I play this D-major instrumental in what's known in the American guitar vernacular as Vastopol tuning (aka open D), lowest string to highest, D–A–D–F♯–A–D. It's based around Harvey and Copeland's "Lonesome Weary Blues" and the one-big-guitar sound that characterized their seamless duets. The structure is A–B–C–B, played twice, with an extra A section at the end. Notated here are all the main sections; visit AG's website for a transcription of the entire track.

The most important point of technique is the steady, four-beat thumbpicked bass line. The open D chord offers a solid tonic-and-fifth pattern, played on strings 6, 5, and 4. I throw in an occasional thumb roll, like the one that anticipates the first beat of measure 5. Like my early guitar inspirations, Mississippi John Hurt and Sam McGee, I pick with my thumb on the lower strings and my index and middle fingers on the upper notes. Whether or not you choose to wear thumb- and fingerpicks as I do, your thumb should be



BILL EVANS

hyperextended (hitchhiker style) and your fingers flexed at each joint. It's common for players to brace their little finger on the face of the guitar in front of the bridge. That's OK, but a free hand is better.

Some things to note in terms of the fretting hand: In bars 12, 20, and elsewhere, I use a D chord shape that on paper appears to be in the eighth position, but which I actually play in the seventh. I play the eighth- and ninth-fret notes on strings 3 and 2 with my second and third fingers, respectively, and, even though I don't pick it, I stop the A on string 4, fret 7, with my first finger. This prevents the open D string's sympathetic vibrations from littering the sound with unwanted overtones. I use a similar approach on the A7

passage first seen in bar 13, where I stop the 11th-fret C♯ without picking that note.

The version of "Copeland's Fancy" on my latest album, *Blues and Folk Songs, Vol. 1* (see review on page 91), includes improvised variations on all three sections, with bent double-stops on the upper strings, as well as alternate chord voicings and phrasing. Since I'm playing solo, I can also take liberties with the form—for instance, adding four bars to the B section on the repeat. Like my antecedent role models, I seldom play anything exactly the same way twice. That's just the way I learned, and I encourage any players who apply themselves to this piece to do the same once they've learned the basic form and melody.

AC

Tuning: D D A D F# A D

A Moderately

D

5

A7 G/B A7 G/B F#dim A7 D A7 D

9

A7 D

13

A7 G/B A7 G/B F#dim A7 D A7 D

17

Cont. on p. 96

COPELAND'S FANCY

Cont. from p. 95

[illegible]

C **D**

37

8va

Harm. ----- 4



41 *8va* A7 G/B A7 G/B F#dim A7 D A7

Harm.

45 D A7 D

49 A7 G/B A7 G/B F#dim A7 D

53 **B** G D

57 A7 G/B A7 G/B F#dim A7 D

61 A7 D



PHOTOS COURTESY OF C.F. MARTIN & CO.

Ca. 1880 Martin Style 0-40

A very old guitar with a storied provenance

BY ADAM PERLMUTTER

In 1966, Joan Baez, then 25 and already an internationally renowned singer and activist, encountered an old Martin that really spoke to her. Joan Saxe, a student at the University of California, Berkeley, had just acquired a circa 1880 Style 0-40, and when Saxe met Baez that year, she handed Baez the guitar and asked if she could help troubleshoot some string rattling. Baez played the instrument and, apparently mesmerized by its dulcet tone, offered to trade Saxe not one but two guitars for the 0-40, promising to reverse the swap if it proved unsatisfactory.

For the next couple of years, Baez performed

and recorded extensively with the 0-40—it's heard on her 1967 album, *Joan*, and seen on the Japanese pressing of *David's Album*. But in 1968, Saxe asked Baez to undo the trade, as the old Martin had been a gift from her grandmother. Saxe continued to enjoy the 0-40 for many years, and put it up for auction with Freeman's when she could no longer play it, not long before her 2016 death. The auction generated much excitement among collectors, but C.F. Martin & Co. scored the winning bid, for \$12,500. Since late 2015, the 0-40 has resided in the Martin Guitar Museum, at the company's Nazareth, Pennsylvania, headquarters.

Aside from the association with Baez, the 0-40 is a remarkable instrument in its own right. Martin only made a dozen or so examples of this deluxe parlor-sized guitar, with its Brazilian rosewood back and sides, bound ebony fretboard, abalone purfling and rosette, and brass (or sometimes German silver) engraved tuners with bone buttons. While this 0-40 is in mostly original condition, save for work on the bridge plate, the instrument's extensive finish wear—not to mention Baez's handwritten set list, still taped to the upper bass bout—speaks to its storied provenance.

AG

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